

Daily Discipleship

Study for The Baptism of Our Lord (C) – Luke 3:15-17, 21-22, 2025.01.12

Imperatives of Discipleship – Baptize!

Focus Question: *How do you support others to live out their baptismal covenant?*

word of life

“Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove.” Luke 3:21-22 (NRSV)

Read Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

¹⁵ *As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,* ¹⁶ *John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.* ¹⁷ *His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”*

²¹ *Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened,* ²² *and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”*

John was quite a personality. It is little wonder that people were filled with expectation and hope. For centuries, the people of Israel had been waiting for God to send a Messiah to them. Perhaps John didn't look like a “typical” Messiah, but he had the confidence of one on fire with God's mission. He spoke as one intimately connected to God. *Could he be the long-awaited one?*

1. *Why else might people think John was the Messiah?*
2. *Why might people doubt if John was the Messiah?*

When the crowds asked John about being the Messiah, he disputed them and did not want them to bestow the title of Messiah upon him. In this case, his words were not based on an unfounded theory. John knew his cousin Jesus was coming. Thus, it was with humility John compared himself with Jesus, feeling unworthy to untie the thong of his sandals. John was clear about his own mission: prepare the way for the true Messiah who would bring judgment and the Holy Spirit.

It is interesting to note that Luke describes the baptism of Jesus after it occurs but while Jesus was praying. Both the themes of prayer and of the Holy Spirit are reoccurring for the author of Luke and Acts. Jesus and the subsequent church are called into a life of prayer.

3. *Imagine Jesus coming out of the waters and praying. What might have been his prayer?*
4. *As you watch a baptism, what might be a prayer for those still wet with the baptismal waters?*

There were three aspects to the baptism: the opening of heaven, descent of the Holy Spirit and God's voice. The opening of heaven was as the prophet Isaiah described centuries earlier when he prayed for God to intervene with fire and judgment. (See Isaiah 64:1-4.) Isaiah acknowledged God doing “awesome deeds that we did not expect.” (Isaiah 64:3 NRSV)

What was more awesome and unexpected for the crowd than the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism? The event of baptism was more than water and words, but included tangible signs of God's presence. And then came the blessing. God's voice was personal and direct to Jesus. This was not a public teaching time for the crowd, but they might have learned much. Rather the baptism was an intimate moment between a delighted God and God's own Son. God was well-pleased. Hopefully, pleasing God greatly pleased Jesus.

5. *What does it take to please God?*
6. *If you were witnessing the baptism of Jesus, what might you be thinking or feeling?*
7. *What difference does it make when the Holy Spirit is present?*

word among us

The pastor tightly holds the sleeping infant beside the baptismal font and gently places warm water on his head, saying "I baptize you in the name of the Father. . ." Sparkling drops of water run down the baby's forehead and race downward towards his ears. Suddenly, the baby's eyes pop open and his thin arms automatically jerk. The baby glances at the pastor as if to say, "You woke me from my nap for what?" With one unified motion, the baby yawns, stretches, finds a comfortable position, and seems to listen to the pastor ". . . in the name of the Son, and the Holy Spirit." These words and warm water on his head bring a smile to the baby's face. All is well.

1. *When and where were you baptized?*
2. *What does it mean for you to be baptized?*

Take a moment to describe the last baptism you witnessed at your congregation. Consider the family and friends of the baptized who traveled perhaps long distances to be present.

3. *What is so significant about baptism?*
4. *Imagine a non-Christian asks you to explain baptism. What would you say?*

Except in cases of emergency, baptisms occur as part of congregational worship. The congregation takes part in the liturgy by confessing the Apostle's Creed, affirming its commitment to support the newly baptized in faith formation, and welcoming the baptized as a worker with Christ in mission and ministry. Although the family is the primary place to nurture a child to grow in faith and to discover more about God's love in Jesus Christ, the congregation has a vital role to support each in discipleship.

5. *Imagine a baby named Agnes is baptized in your congregation as an infant and remains in your faith community until high school graduation. How would your congregation nurture Agnes in faith in Jesus Christ?*
6. *How does your congregation nurture adults to grow in faith in Jesus Christ?*

A baptized person receives the Holy Spirit as well as gifts of the Spirit. During our life on this earth, we have the opportunity to discover our God-given gifts and to seek ways to use those gifts to build up the body of Christ and to spread the Good News of Jesus to the world. It is a privilege and a responsibility to claim our baptism, but each of us needs encouragement.

7. *Reflect on someone in your own life who needs extra encouragement. How might you support someone else?*
8. *Where do you go when you need encouragement?*
9. *Imagine God saying to you, "You are my child, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." What does that feel like?*
10. *How might knowing of God's love help you in your week?*

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you anointed Jesus at his baptism with the Holy Spirit and revealed him as your beloved Son. Keep all who are born of water and the Spirit faithful in your service, that we may rejoice to be called children of God, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Dig Deeper

John 1:29-34

last word

Begin each day by placing the sign of the cross on your forehead.

But also, make a commitment to look for the sign of the cross on the foreheads of those with whom you interact each day.



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Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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