

Baptism of Our Lord (B) – Mark 1:4-11

An Attitude of Discipleship: *Connected*

Focus Question: *How does baptism connect disciples with God and other disciples?*

word of life

“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” Mark 1:11 (NRSV)

Read Mark 1:4-11

From birth, John the Baptist and Jesus were connected through the friendship of their mothers. Mary went to Elizabeth as soon as Mary found out she was pregnant. Pregnant Elizabeth proclaimed to pregnant Mary, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb . . . For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy” (Luke 1:41-44 NRSV). Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months of her pregnancy.

No doubt, John and Jesus knew each other well through their shared family connection, but they also knew a shared dedication to serving God. Despite the crowds from the Judean countryside and Jerusalem who clearly came to see John, he did not preach about himself. Instead, he pointed to Christ. Through baptism, God launched Jesus into public ministry and mission.

1. *Why is the connection between John and Jesus important?*
2. *What can we learn from that connection?*

John prepared the people for Jesus through a baptism of repentance. The baptism he taught and did was with water alone; it was a ritual cleansing. Jesus will do something new in baptism, connecting the baptized with the Holy Spirit.

3. *How are the baptisms proclaimed by Jesus and John different?*

When Jesus was baptized, the heavens opened, the Spirit descended, and a voice from heaven was heard. “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (vs. 11). In the baptism of Jesus, there is a unique connection between God and Jesus as a parent to a child. When we look at Jesus, we see God.

4. *Why did Jesus need to be baptized?*
5. *How do you explain the connection between God and Jesus?*

At Jesus’ baptism, there was also a public connection between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The form of a dove was a visible endorsement of the Holy Spirit’s presence. God’s voice added to the weight of the moment. Jesus was the “real deal” – God’s only beloved Son in whom God was well-pleased. In addition to being a public endorsement, this was a very intimate moment between parent and child. The key word is “*Beloved.*”

6. *How does it feel to be called “beloved,” especially by God?*

God as parent, child, and spirit were connected in a single unit in the baptism of Jesus, giving Jesus a clear mission. From this baptism, Jesus went into action, inviting others to connect with his mission and to follow him. In following Christ, people connect with God and the Holy Spirit in new ways, receiving God’s promise of salvation.

7. *What are your impressions of the baptism of Jesus?*
8. *Why is it helpful to clarify the connections between God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?*

word *among us*

At the ELCA National Youth Gathering some years ago, a long-distance race was scheduled. The finish line was established inside the convention hall where at least 30,000 youth had gathered. Each synod designated one person to run the race.

The crowd of thousands applauded at the first sight of each runner entering the building. Eventually, the announcer proclaimed the final runner was within sight. The crowd geared up to see the last place runner. Poor runner. Would he or she be embarrassed to finish in last place?

But instead of a lone final runner, a small group of runners came into the convention center holding hands. When the crowd saw the final group of runners, everyone knew what had happened. The runners did not want one of their fellow competitors to face the crowd alone in last place; instead, a few of the participants had waited outside the convention door for the final runner. There was no last place finisher. The crowd erupted into thunderous approval. The crowd was connected as a single unit.

After the race was over, a giant cross of white fabric was lifted high, flapping as it ascended. Each of us in the convention center was reminded of our baptism. We are not alone, but are connected with Christ and with one another

1. *When did you first realize you were connected with other Christians?*
2. *How does your connection with Christ help when you go through difficulties?*
3. *What experiences have helped you remember your baptism?*

We long for connections. We long to belong. In baptism, we are connected with God. We are named and claimed as God's beloved.

4. *What does it mean for you to be baptized?*
5. *What does it mean for you to be God's beloved?*

In baptism, we also become connected with others who are baptized, including the whole of the Church. Our baptized brothers and sisters come in all shapes and sizes, speaking many languages. We might not always agree with our brothers and sisters, but we are connected through Jesus Christ.

6. *Give any examples of when your connection with other baptized disciples has caused you discomfort.*
7. *How has knowing you are connected with other baptized disciples helped you in life?*

We know only too well our need to be connected to God and to one another. It is far too easy to go astray, connecting with the latest fads and discarding Christ. Daily we pray for the Spirit to keep us connected with Christ and to other disciples of Christ.

8. *What might you do this week to keep you connected with Christ?*

Prayer

Gracious God, send your Holy Spirit and connect me with Christ, so I might bring you joy.

Dig Deeper

Matthew 3: 13-17



Daily Discipleship

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last word

Each morning this week,
make the sign of the cross on your forehead
and remember your baptism.