

ORDER OF WORSHIP
Sunday, October 18, 2020
This I Believe, Part 2: Our Baptism Vows

COUNTDOWN w/ ANNOUNCEMENTS

UMCA INTRO

WELCOME

Kim Harris

OPENING VERSE

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (Laura)

Israel, listen! Our God is the Lord! Only the Lord! Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your strength.

PRELUDE

Diane Gronewold

OPENING PRAYER AND AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Rachael voiceover

SONG WITH BRIAN

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing
Hymn Arrangement by Brian Schroeder

Come thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace
Streams of mercy never-ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above
Praise the mount I'm fixed upon it, mount of God's redeeming love

Here I raise my Ebenezer; hither by thy help I've come
And I hope by thy good pleasure safely to arrive at home
Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God
He, to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood

O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be
Let thy goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to thee
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Laura - record brief video:

This week I had the great joy and privilege of baptizing Caspian into this community of faith. The small number of people present served as representatives of you, the congregation. Caspian's parents, sponsors, and family responded to the baptism vows and committed to a life that serves and honors Jesus, repents of sin, resists evil and injustice, and offers Caspian a church where he will be able to grow up experiencing love and forgiveness. Now, we need you to do your part - to commit to praying for Caspian and his parents today and throughout their lives and to welcome Caspian as the newest member of our UMCA community. Please join me in the congregational response to baptism.

With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround Caspian with a community of love and forgiveness, so that he may grow in service to others. We will pray for him that he may be a true disciple who walks in the way that leads to life.

Caspian, we give thanks for all that God has already given you and we welcome you in Christian love. As members together with you in the body of Christ and in the family of faith, we renew our covenant to participate in the ministries of the Church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness, that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

OFFERING INTRO AND PRAYER

Laura - already recorded

SPECIAL MUSIC

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 4:13-30

After finishing every temptation, the devil departed from him until the next opportunity.

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because the Lord has anointed me.

*He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed,
and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

Everyone was raving about Jesus, so impressed were they by the gracious words flowing from his lips. They said, "This is Joseph's son, isn't it?"

Then Jesus said to them, "Undoubtedly, you will quote this saying to me: 'Doctor, heal yourself. Do here in your hometown what we've heard you did in Capernaum.'" He said, "I assure you that no prophet is welcome in the prophet's hometown. And I can assure you that there were many widows in Israel during Elijah's time, when it didn't rain for three and a half years and there was a great food shortage in the land. Yet Elijah was sent to none of them but only to a widow in the city of Zarephath in the region of Sidon. There were also many persons with skin diseases in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha, but none of them were cleansed. Instead, Naaman the Syrian was cleansed."

When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was filled with anger. They rose up and ran him out of town. They led him to the crest of the hill on which their town had been built so that they could throw him off the cliff. But he passed through the crowd and went on his way.

SERMON

10/18/20

Our Baptismal Vows

I hope your hearts are filled with joy as you see the pictures of Caspian and affirm his baptism into the community of faith! I told his family when they gathered in a very small group with us this week that his baptism is a gift to all of us - a reason to rejoice, a sign of hope for the future, and a reminder that the church is still alive, even now. Caspian is a gift from God, and we are wise to receive him with gratitude and a sense of responsibility.

As we move through October, this short series called This I Believe is space for us to celebrate the ways God is faithful in our own lives and in the church as well as to consider what our faith means for us in our bodies, in our families, in our relationships, in our neighborhoods, in our

world. At the beginning of the month we rejoiced as seven new members joined UMCA, enthusiastic about our mission of making new disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, our vision of providing hope to our community, and our commitment that God's love is for everyone.

Last week we heard an important message from Bishop Ough, sharing the vision and direction of the United Methodist Church here in Minnesota. Next Sunday you will hear faith statements from our 2020 Confirmation class, a group of thoughtful young people whose insights about faith will give you so much to consider about your own faith!

Today, as we celebrate baptism, we have the opportunity to hone in on one of the most significant moments of our faith journeys, our baptism, and the vows we have heard recited so many times over the years.

Have you been baptized? As an infant, child, or adult? Did you speak your own responses to the baptismal vows, or did someone who loved you speak them on your behalf? When you think about your own baptism, what feelings or images come to mind?

In the United Methodist Church, baptism is one of two sacraments - the other is Communion. For us, baptism is at the heart of our identity as beloved children of God and at the heart of our identity in one another as a community of faith bound together and committed to holding one another in love, accountability, and forgiveness as we grow and follow Jesus in our world.

This morning, as we take a close look at the vows that we made or were made on our behalf at baptism, I invite you to think about Caspian, brand new in this world, just beginning his life's adventure. What will these baptism vows mean for him? And how will you, as the community of faith his parents have entrusted with this moment, live up to the response you offered him today?

Do you affirm and embrace the truth that God loves you, forgives you, and claims you for faithful life in Jesus Christ?

Do you reject all that is evil, repent of your sin, and accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in God's grace, and promise to serve Jesus as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?

At the heart of these questions and responses, is our identity, both individual and collective. Do you know who you are (or who this child is) in Christ, and do you know who you are together as the church?

Will you honor yourself and others as beloved of God, forgiven and claimed? Will you trust in God's grace to build a church for all people, including you? And will you live in this world, as an individual and together with us all, resisting evil, injustice, and oppression?

These commitments reflect for us that following Jesus is about both what we will receive and what we will give, what we will learn and what we will teach, who we are as unique and specific and who we are together as God's people. Will we meet them perfectly at every moment? Probably not. But as people of faith, we are committed to keep doing the hard work.

And it is hard work in 2020, isn't it? (This is the part where, if we were in person I would ask you again and again until you responded.)

It is hard work in 2020, isn't it?

Yes!

Yes.

Yes...

So let's go back a few thousand years. Let's go back to the day when Jesus, having been baptized by John in the river, then driven into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit, then tempted by Satan the accuser to give in to human temptations like hunger, greed, and power, finally heads home. Jesus returns to his hometown of Nazareth, where he grew up, to launch his official, public ministry.

It starts out okay. Jesus stands up and reads from the scroll of Isaiah.

"Hey, isn't that Joseph's boy?" someone whispers loudly.

Their chests puff up with pride as Jesus proclaims, in the words of the prophet, good news for the poor, the sick, the oppressed, and the captive. The year of the Lord's favor! They beam as Jesus says, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus, son of Nazareth, has returned to them and they place themselves in the reading of Isaiah as those who will be favored, healed, released. The crowd begins to buzz with excitement.

And then Jesus spills the tea.

Oh, family and friends, this story isn't for your glory. I'm not here to comfort you as Joseph's son. I'm not here to become Nazareth's own personal Savior. I'm here as a prophet, and you may not like the news I bring as much as you thought you would. This story is for God's glory. This story is for all the world - from the ancient prophets to the present day - this is a proclamation for the widows of Zaphereth in Sodom Sidon and for the sick in Syria.

When they heard this, well...you heard what happened. They ran him out of town, and if they could've thrown him right off a cliff, they would have.

So, as it turns out, this was hard work two thousand years ago, too.

As we consider our baptism vows, it's important we take an honest look at where we are located in these stories from scripture. Are we shocked at the behavior of the Nazareth synagogue-goers? Or are we right there with them, wanting Jesus to make our own lives more comfortable and pleasing and satisfying, but angered at the suggestion that our call in following Jesus is not about our comfort or about God granting our wish lists? How do we respond when Jesus makes us uncomfortable with the ways of this world that are evil, unjust, and oppressive and calls us to resist them in the very core of our Christian identity?

In Nazareth that day, Jesus took a perfectly lovely, feel-good, inspiring, hometown church service and turned it into an awkward and disruptive reminder that God was not only for one group of people, not even his own group of people.

Our baptism vows, which we sometimes move through quickly in an otherwise lovely, feel-good, inspiring, hometown church service, might do the same if we allow ourselves to hear and receive them and even be made uncomfortable, challenged, or unsettled by them.

What I expect unsettles us even more is the challenge to live out these commitments all our lives. How has the church been a barrier instead of an open place for all people? When have we chosen polite behavior, comfort, and inspiration over resisting evil, injustice, and oppression? Where have we elevated a person to a status that rivals our worship of Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord?

No wonder they wanted to run him off a cliff. Everything is at stake with Jesus. Everything is at stake.

I want to close with a lovely story I read this week on social media. A reminder that we need the children, like Caspian, to teach us as much as we could ever hope to teach them. A simple and beautiful illustration of what it looks like to resist the ways we've restricted God's love.

In closing, I invite you to spend this week considering what people God is calling you to embrace who you might have otherwise decided not to notice. I invite you to prayerfully name what evil, injustice, and oppression look like in our neighborhoods and communities and consider what you might do to resist.

Finally, I invite you to remember your baptism by speaking these commitments together now:

I affirm and embrace the truth that God loves me, forgives me, and claims me for faithful life in Jesus Christ.

I reject all that is evil, repent of my sin, and accept the freedom and power God gives me to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

I confess Jesus Christ as my Savior, put my whole trust in God's grace, and promise to serve Jesus as my Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races.

May it be so.

Amen.

HYMN

The Summons

PASTORAL PRAYER

Laura Record

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Congregation

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Diane Gronewold