

**1/11/26**  
**Baptism of Jesus**  
**For Group Meetings from January 4<sup>th</sup> – January 10<sup>th</sup>**

**OUR MISSION:** As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

**Prayer of the Day:** O God our Father, at the baptism of Jesus you proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized into Christ faithful to their calling to be your daughters and sons, and empower us all with your Spirit, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### **BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER**

**Share:** How did last week's scripture (Matthew 2:13-23) work in your life this week?

**Mission:**

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

**Hear:** Matthew 3:13-17

**Explore Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. How does John initially respond to Jesus request?
2. Why does Jesus choose John to baptize him instead of a priest in the temple?
3. What titles or descriptions are given to Jesus in this passage?

**Connect Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Where do you tend to look for affirmation?
2. What does it look like for you to "live your baptism" in ordinary, daily life?
3. Where have you experienced God's presence in unexpected or ordinary moments?

**Memorize this verse:**

"And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:17) Who or what reminds you that you are beloved?

### **BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:**

**Obey:** During this week follow through on your intentions.

**Meditate:** Meditate on Psalm 29. How does this speak into your life?

**Reflect:** What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

## Notes for ChristCare leaders:

There are a number of interesting questions surrounding the gospel accounts of Jesus' baptism. Questions that date from the earliest Christian communities. In fact, given the various re-workings of the story by the four evangelists, it's likely the very existence of this account was troubling. Why did Jesus need to be baptized by John at all? Surely it wasn't for the forgiveness of sin or because John was the greater prophet or teacher. Then why? Each gospel writer works out a distinct response to this question, including Matthew in today's reading, where he links Jesus' baptism to the fulfillment of righteousness. While these differences are both important and interesting, all four gospels share two plot-related features that I think are key to this passage. First, in each account Jesus' baptism is accompanied by the giving of the Spirit, and in three of them it is accompanied by a voice from heaven pronouncing Jesus' God's beloved Son, a child with whom God is most pleased. Whatever else Jesus' baptism may mean, clearly it is the place where he learns definitively who he is in relation to whose he is. At his baptism, Jesus is given the intertwined gifts of identity and affirmation.

This leads to the second important plot element of the gospels: Jesus' baptism precedes the commencement of his public ministry. In John's account, this begins with the calling of the first disciples. In Matthew and his cousins Mark and Luke, Jesus is tempted in the wilderness immediately following his baptism and only then begins calling followers. In all four, the theme is clear: the gift of identity precedes mission. We might even go further and say that only by having a clear sense of God's affirmation and identity can Jesus take on the enormous mission in front of him. This is poignantly clear in Matthew and Luke, where the Tempter's point of attack is precisely at the question of identity: "If you are the Son of God...." Satan calls into question Jesus' relationship with his Father because he knows that Jesus, as with Adam and Eve before him, is vulnerable to temptation precisely to the degree that his is insecure about his identity and mistrusts his relationship with God.

And this is where these stories of Jesus' baptism intersect with the stories of our own. For we can only live into the mission that God has set for us to the degree that we hear and believe the good news that we, too, are beloved children of God. As with Jesus, we discover in baptism who we are by hearing definitively whose we are. Baptism is nothing less than the promise that we are God's beloved children. That no matter where we go, God will be with us. That no matter what we may do, God is for us and will not abandon us. In baptism, we are blessed with the promise of God's Spirit and given a name, and that name is Christian, one marked with the cross of Christ and named a beloved child of God forever. This matters tremendously because names are powerful. The names we are given or take, the names that arouse pride or shame, names are important. Some we have chosen; others have been given to us. Some lift us up; others tear us down. Whatever the case, names are powerful. This reading promises, however, that no matter how powerful our earthly names, yet they do not define us. What defines us is the name given to us by God alone: the name of beloved child.

## Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

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### *Traditional version:*

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us  
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,  
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

### *Contemporary version:*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those  
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial  
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the  
power, and the glory are yours,  
Now and forever. Amen