

**Prayer of Preparation:** *Take me to the water, Take me to the water, Take me to the water to be baptized.*

Gracious God, thank you for the waters of baptism. Thank you for waters that change us. Thank you for waters that lead us to you and your purpose in our lives. *Amen.*

This year is all about baptism, our baptism, our baptism and how the waters of baptism can reset our lives. Last week was Baptism of the Lord Sunday and read Luke’s gospel account. I want you to hear the Luke’s gospel, once again, with a fresh ear:

And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

*Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work.*

According to Luke’s gospel, here’s what happened: Jesus was baptized, Jesus prayed, there’s a voice from heaven...and Jesus began his work.

Here’s the thing about the waters of baptism: they change us *and* they send us. The waters of baptism change us from who we used to be to be more of who God calls us to be. The waters of baptism restores our soul to the image of God. The waters of baptism help us to see with God’s eyes, hear with God’s ears, and love with God’s heart so that when we are sent into God’s world we may do God’s work.

Hear Mark’s gospel with a fresh ear:

That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed by demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons, and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

God sent Jesus into the world with purpose; Mark’s gospel shares with us that Jesus came to cure the sick and cast out demons. And it all started with the waters of baptism.

We are sent out of the waters of baptism with purpose; God’s purpose for us in the world. Our reaffirmation of our baptism on Baptism of the Lord Sunday reminds us that it’s time to reset ourselves and our purpose to God’s purpose. It’s the time to ask ourselves what is God trying to accomplish in us *and* through us. Mark’s gospel says one of Jesus’s purposes is to cure the sick and cast out demons. That may be God’s purpose for some of us but for others our purpose may be different.

This is the place and this is the time we either seek out our purpose or renew our dedication to our purpose. This new year is all about us and our renewed dedication to our life in Christ.

Setting, or resetting, what we do and how we do it is a worthy endeavor. Grace Church has a strong and worthy tradition of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and raising disciples to pastoral ministry. Our “yes” to those traditions are “yeses” to God and how we fulfill the purpose we received in the waters of baptism. But that’s Grace Church’s purpose...what’s yours?

What is God calling you to do as an individual? What is God calling you to do in this season of your life? In the language of our youth, what’s your “Y”? That’s what God is asking each of us in this season of life. We have a habit of being “busy,” too busy to take time to stop, pray, and listen to what God has purposed us to do. I want you to hear Luke’s gospel once again, *Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying...* Jesus was praying and resetting his life to leave the Jordan River and begin his ministry of healing and care.

God has given each of us a calling and purpose to address the world's grief. Some of us have received a calling to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. They work in the food pantry and clothes closet. Some of us have received a calling to lift up their voices in song, they have joined the choir. Some of us have received a calling to administration and they do the paperwork for the church. No matter what God is calling you to do, you have a place here.

In Mark's gospel, Jesus leaves the Jordan ready to begin healing the nations. Family of God, I want you to hear the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, Jesus left the banks of the Jordan River to become a balm for the nations.

**Response to the Word:** *There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole; there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.*