



Worship Service: Sunday after Epiphany: Baptism and Water

Helpful Elements:

Green tablecloth (Ordinary Time)

Water pitcher (unbreakable) with water in it

Shallow bowl

River stones and/or smooth beach glass

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time. Today we are celebrating the **baptism** of the Lord Jesus, the day that John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. We'll have a chance to remember our own baptisms and to think about **water** in general. Thank you for joining me.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. We pray in your holy name. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith, p. 2: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd," together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

Joyful, Joyful

For the Beauty of the Earth

We Gather Together

First reading: This is the story of Jesus' baptism from Mark's gospel (Mark 1:4-11):

⁴John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to John and were being baptized by John in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ... ⁷And John preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I ... ⁸I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹In those days Jesus came from Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

¹⁰And when Jesus came up out of the water, immediately Jesus saw the heavens open and the Spirit of God descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven saying, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Jesus Loves Me

Oh, How I love Jesus

Second reading: This is from the first book of the Bible: Genesis 1:1-2, 6-10:

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ...

⁶And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷And God made the expanse and separated the waters under and above it. And it was so. ⁸And God called the expanse Heaven.

⁹And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

His Eye is on the Sparrow

Shall We Gather at the River

Interactive Homily: Let's talk more about baptism and water. In all faiths, water is considered a sacred substance, part of the original creation and absolutely necessary for life.

- What can water do?
 - Quench thirst, refresh.
 - Make alive; even resurrect something, like a plant.
 - Wash and cleanse: hands, face, laundry ...
 - Water can also slowly wear away rough edges, making things smooth, like river stones or sea glass.
- Many religions use baptism in some form. What kinds of people, objects, and actions are typically involved in a baptism?
 - Pastor, priest, or another officiant.
 - Water, which is poured over or sprinkled on the person's head, or in which the person is fully immersed.
 - Baptismal fount, like a basin; or a tub, pool, even a river or lake.
- Where might a baptism take place? If you were baptized, where did that happen?
 - At church, in a river, at home, in a hospital.
- Let's think about water as it relates to baptism. Since water is life-giving and cleansing, what do you think baptism means in a life of faith?

- Just as it was with John the Baptist, baptism is a physical symbol for us to acknowledge and confess sin, receive spiritual cleansing, and join your life with Christ.
- Like a cleansing, God's forgiveness cleans us from what we want to leave behind and refreshes us with new life.
- Baptism signals a commitment to and relationship with God, marked by trust in God for everything in life.

Today, if you'd like, you can reaffirm or remember your own baptism; or you may simply reflect on the blessing of life-giving water and God's work in your life.

The Methodist liturgy says, "Through the reaffirmation of our faith, we renew the promise declared at our baptism and acknowledge what God is doing for us." I'll walk around with the water, which you can use to make the sign of the cross on your forehead. Or you may simply touch or scoop up the water to enjoy its coolness.

- *Pour water from pitcher into bowl with smooth stones and beach glass.*
- *Pray aloud:* "Lord God, pour out your Holy Spirit to bless this gift of water and those who receive it."
- *Put on hymn music; walk around to let residents touch water one at a time.*

(Silent Prayer) ... Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: 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, Amen.

Hymns:

In the Garden

He's Got the Whole World

Third Reading: "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," by Langston Hughes, 1920

I've known rivers:
 I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
 flow of human blood in human veins.
 My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Hymns:

Amazing Grace

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Fourth Reading: A few lighthearted stories about baptism ☺

A man stumbled into a baptismal service on a Sunday afternoon down by the river. He walked into the water and stood next to the preacher. The minister asked him, "Mister, are you ready to find Jesus?" The man answered, "Yes, preacher, I sure am."

The minister dunked the fellow under the water and pulled him right back up. "Have you found Jesus?" the preacher asked. "Nooo, I have not, Reverend," said the man.

The preacher dunked the man again and held him under for at least 30 seconds. When the preacher brought the man up out of the water, the preacher asked sternly, "My man, have you found Jesus yet?" The man wiped his eyes and said, "Are you sure this is where he fell in?"¹

A mom told this story:

Recently my 7-year-old son was baptized at nearby Lake Tahoe. With tears streaming down my face, I watched as he came out of the water. I excitedly asked if he felt any different.

"Yeah, Mom, I do," he replied. "Now I have water up my nose!"²

¹ (Leslie A. Williamson, Gardnerville, NV., Today's Christian Woman, "Heart to Heart." From a sermon by Larry Wilson, Biblica Baptism, 9/29/2012)

² Ibid.

One day, after a hard rainstorm filled all the potholes in the streets and alleys, a young mother watched her two little boys playing in a large puddle.

The older of the two boys, a 5-year-old lad, grabbed his little brother by the back of his head and shoved his face into the water hole. As the boy recovered and stood laughing and dripping, the mother ran to the yard in a panic.

“Why on earth did you do that to your little brother?” she asked.

“We were playing church, Mommy,” the older boy said. “I was just baptizing him in the name of the Father, in the Son and ... in the hole-he-goes!”³

A pastor said to a man about to be baptized: “Baptism is a serious step. Are you prepared for it?”

The man replied: “Yes. My wife made sandwiches and a cake.”

The pastor said: “I am talking about the condition of your spirit.”

The man said: “Oh, that. I have two bottles of vodka and some scotch.”⁴

Hymns:

When the Saints Go Marching In

How Great Thou Art

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise

³<http://www.cleanjoke.com/humor/Boy-Baptism-.html>

⁴<http://www.mrjam.org/2010/02/10-best-christian-jokes.html>