

First Sunday after Epiphany
Baptism of our Lord
January 10, 2021
Cross of Glory Lutheran Church
Brooklyn Center, MN

PRELUDE

WELCOME

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, whose voice is upon the waters, whose mercy is poured out upon all people, whose love cascades over all creation. **Amen.**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, let us give thanks for the gift of baptism:

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family. Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By water and your Word you claim us as daughters and sons, making us brothers and sisters of all. We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ. Shower us with your Spirit, and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

† You are invited to mark the sign of the cross on your forehead with water, or mark the forehead of a loved one in your home, and hear these words from today's Gospel text: You are a beloved child of God. In you God is well pleased. **Amen!**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In baptism, we are called to die to ourselves and to rise to the life given as a gift in Jesus Christ. So we gather at the font also to repent, taking a moment of silence to confess our sins before God and one another.

Holy God, **we repent of our sinful ways: the ways we turn inward, failing to live your outward way of love. The ways we distrust those who are not like us. The ways we exploit the earth and its resources, and fail to consider generations to come. Forgive us, gracious God, for all our sins—those we commit knowingly and unknowingly, individually and communally, by our actions and by our inaction. Even before we give voice to these sins, you know them. So receive them now in your divine mercy. Amen.**

Just as water flows down to the lowest places, so too does God's grace flow down to our lowest places. Through the power and promise of † Christ Jesus, our sins are washed away and we are claimed as God's beloved children. Indeed, we are forgiven. In the wake of God's forgiveness, let us live out our baptismal callings, striving for justice and peace in all the earth. **Amen.**

OPENING HYMN #510 Word of God, Come Down to Earth verses 1, 2 and 3

1 Word of God, come down on earth,
living rain from heav'n descending;
touch our hearts and bring to birth
faith and hope and love unending.
Word almighty, we revere you;

2 Word eternal, throned on high,
Word that brought to life creation,
Word that came from heav'n to die,
crucified for our salvation,
saving Word, the world restoring,

Word made flesh, we long to hear you.

Speak to us, your love outpouring.

- 3** Word that speaks God's tender love,
one with God beyond all telling,
Word that sends us from above
God the Spirit, with us dwelling,
Word of truth, to all truth lead us;
Word of life, with one bread feed us.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

KYRIE

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen, amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE

Refrain: This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God.

Power and riches, wisdom and strength, and honor and blessing and glory are his. *Refrain*

Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation: Blessing and honor, glory and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. *Refrain*

For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray . . . **Holy Spirit, just as you descended upon Jesus at his baptism, descend upon us now, that in hearing your voice, we might use our voices to echo your love and to live out our baptism callings in our daily lives; through the power of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

READING: Genesis 1:1-5

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

PSALM 29

- ¹Ascribe to the LORD, you gods,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
²Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God's name;
worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.
³The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders;
the LORD is upon the mighty waters.
⁴The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice;
the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor.
⁵The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
⁶the LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.
⁷The voice of the LORD
bursts forth in lightning flashes.
⁸The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
⁹The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare.
And in the temple of the LORD all are crying, "Glory!"
¹⁰The LORD sits enthroned above the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king forevermore.
¹¹O LORD, give strength to your people;
give them, O LORD, the blessings of peace. R

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

SPECIAL MUSIC Keith Williams

GOSPEL: Mark 1:4-11

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

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

¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON Rev. Ali Tranvik

Every story starts somewhere. Ours, as people of faith, begins in a deep, dark, formless void. What does God do first within this void? Well technically, the first action the Bible describes God doing is dance. Genesis 1:1, which we read a moment ago, says that the wind (or Spirit) of God "swept" over the face of the waters. "Swept" in Hebrew is *merahepet*, which also translates to "fluttered" or even "shimmied" (Bridgeman). In the beginning, God shimmied...

Today, we aren't focusing on the shimmying God (although that, I admit, is very intriguing...a sermon for another day!). We're going to look at the *speaking* God. Because that's what God does next in the creation story, and it's what God continues to do throughout the entire biblical story. God speaks creation into being in the first verses of Genesis. Later, God speaks to Noah and tells

him to build an ark. God speaks to Joseph in a dream. God speaks through a burning bush to Moses. God whispers to Samuel in the night. God speaks to the prophets—Amos, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Isaiah—words of judgement and justice, words of promise and hope. All throughout Scripture, God speaks to God's people.

Does God speak to *us*? Faithful Christians across the ages have sought to hear God's voice through scripture, through prayer, through conversation, through community (Powery). You may have heard stories of people who have claimed to hear God's voice, or maybe you have stories of your own. But how do we recognize God's voice? How can we be so sure? I don't know about you, but I find it to be all too easy to fool myself into thinking that the voice telling me what I *want* to hear—about myself, about my enemies—is God's voice. That the voice of my own ego, or my own agenda, or my own will is God's. In my better moments, I realize that's just me, but the question still stands: Does God speak to us? If so, what does God say?

Today's texts suggest that God's voice is not limited to the past, or to the pages of our Holy Bible, but that indeed, God *is* speaking to us still—all the time, in fact! What does God's voice sound like? Is it soprano or alto, tenor or bass? Is it the voice of an elder, or does it sound more like the voice of a child? Is it a man's voice? A woman's voice? Both? Something else? Is it speaking English? Another language? No language at all? Is it booming and loud, or is it gentle and quiet, only audible when we still ourselves long enough to hear it?

The voices we tend to listen to most in our world are the ones that are loudest, right? The sheer volume of some voices demands our attention, while other voices are drowned out or disregarded completely. We hear this volume in the media, right? The news stories that get the most views, the most air time are those that make the most noise. And it's important for us as people of faith to note, these are often the ones that seek to instill fear, to warn us of a "threat," to tell us we are under attack, because fear is what sells. Whether it be anything from a blizzard to an election, the media voices shouting fear are the ones we hear the loudest. This is not just the case on TV; we probably hear this constant cacophony of noise in our own social circles, on our own facebook pages, at our own dinner tables. So how do we recognize God's voice amidst the "the jangling echoes of turbulence," as theologian and civil rights leader Howard Thurman puts it? What does it sound like? What is it saying?

Today's texts give us a few clues. First, they tell us that **God's voice is loving**. We see this in the passage from Mark, the story of Jesus' baptism. When Jesus came up out of the river Jordan, the Spirit of God (that fluttering, shimmying Spirit again!) descends on him like a dove and a voice from heaven says: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (1:11). God's voice is a loving voice. It's a voice that affirms our belovedness.

Now, this passage takes place at the very beginning of Mark. Jesus has not yet even started his ministry—he hasn't healed lepers or preached a parable, he hasn't stilled a storm or walked on water, he hasn't fed the 5,000 with bread or the disciples with the bread of his very body at the Last Supper. Aside from anything Jesus *does*, God speaks to him these words of love.

And they are spoken to *us* in *our* baptisms too, aside from anything *we* have done (or have left undone). That's why we in the Lutheran tradition are typically baptized as babies and not as adults. Because we believe this word of love comes to us as a gift, not as a choice, it comes to us entirely independent of our actions. These words are spoken to us not when we're ready to embrace them, or when we finally have done enough to earn them. Baptism takes no stock of our "religious resumes," or for that matter our actual resumes, or our paychecks, or how many friends we have, or how many volunteer hours we've managed to "squeeze in." And thank goodness, because as Luther was so rightly adamant about, if baptism was a matter of merit, we'd never measure up. And if baptism was a matter of choice, we'd never choose it. So most of us are literally *carried* to the font as tiny, stinky, helpless babies. And frankly, as much as we'd like to think otherwise, not much has changed since our diaper days. We may have gained some control of our limbs, but we are just as dependent now as we were then. In fact, if anything, we've utilized our motor skills to run as fast and as far away from our baptisms as we can. To try and drown out the sound of God's word of love. Because we never asked for these words. We are much more comfortable making sense of a world in which people get what they deserve (for better or worse) than one in which we're told—in spite of ourselves—that we are undeservedly and unconditionally *beloved*.

Second, today's texts tell us that **God's voice is creative**. We see this in the passage from Genesis.

"Let there be light," God says, and there was light. God says it, and then it was. If we continue reading the Genesis story, we'd see that God continues to speak life into being. God speaks into being night and day, sun and moon and stars, sky and sea and land and all the creatures within it. God speaks, and new life is created. God speaks to Jesus in his baptism, and new life is created. God speaks to us in our baptisms, and new life is created.

Thirdly and relatedly, **God's voice is transformative**. We see this in today's psalm. Psalm 29 says God's voice is "powerful." It doesn't leave the world the same. God's voice "breaks the cedars," and "flashes forth flames of fire." God's voice "shakes the wilderness," "causes the oaks to whirl," and "strips the forests bare." God's voice shakes up the very foundations of the world, it disrupts the order of things. The things we thought were forever, strong and secure like the cedars, snap like twigs at the Word of the Lord. The things we think are unbreakable, God breaks; the mightiest oaks are no match for the might of God (Powery). Empires will rise and fall. Rulers will reign and fade away. Pandemics will come, and yes, eventually they too will go. But God's Word will always endure (Isa 40:8). It will always be forming and re-forming and trans-forming. Always breaking and shaking things up, always making things new.

Just as this voice doesn't leave the world the same, it doesn't leave *us* the same either. We hear God's voice first speak to us first at our baptisms, when the Spirit shimmies down on us and God's voice speaks to us: "*You* are my beloved son." "*You* are my beloved daughter." And these words transform us. They call us into a transformed way of living, which is actually described in the words of our Lutheran baptismal liturgy: As baptized people, we are to "live among God's faithful people; hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper; proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed; serve all people following the example of Jesus; and strive for justice and peace in all the earth" (ELW, 236). These words describe a transformed way of living. They describe what we call in the Lutheran tradition "vocation."

Interesting, then, that we get the word "vocation" from the Latin *vocare*, meaning "voice" (Powery). God's voice spoken to us in our baptisms is what gives us our vocation, our *vocare*, our voice. Or maybe we could say that our vocation is to *echo* God's voice. Maybe we could say that to live out our baptisms is to live our lives *reverberating* God's loving, and creative, and transformative voice.

If this is the call we receive in our baptism and the call of our ongoing baptismal living, then we must ask: How are we using our voice? How are we speaking? Are the words we're using in our daily lives words that echo God's Word? I certainly don't ask myself these questions every time I speak but let's get concrete about it for a moment: How are we using our voice when we are on our fourth Zoom meeting of the day, or when we're responding to the tenth email in a row? How are we using our voice to speak uncomfortable but truthful words to a loved one at the dinner table (or to speak loving words to the one with whom our relationship is uncomfortable)? Are we using our voice when our low-income neighbors here in Brooklyn Center are targeted by predatory lenders and sink deeper into a cycle of debt? Are we using our voice to thank, genuinely thank, the fast-food drive-through worker at the window for their service? Are we using our voice in the midst of the conversations where hateful words are hurled at those of a different religion or political party or sexuality or race, in situations when it may be far easier to step back to the sidelines and stay silent? Are we using our voice to call up a Cross of Glory friend who is alone to tell them that even in the midst of this horrible physical isolation, there is a community of people who loves them and who will keep walking with them?

There are many ways to "let our lives speak" as author Parker Palmer puts it. Many ways to live out of vocation, to use our *vocare*, our voice. Many ways to echo the voice that was spoken to us in our baptisms: "*You* are my beloved son." "*You* are my beloved daughter." That voice, though, was not through with us in our baptisms. That voice continues to speak to us still, in this life which is "but a daily baptism," as Martin Luther says. It is a voice that is still loving us, still creating in us, still transforming us, still giving us voice. Let's use those voices to say "Amen?" (This is where I really miss a sanctuary full of people!) Amen!

Sources:

- *Evangelical Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2006).
- Luke Powery, "The Voice of the Lord," *sermon preached at Duke University Chapel*, Jan 7, 2018.

- Thurman, Howard. "How Good to Center Down!" from *Meditations of the Heart* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953).
- Parker, Palmer. *Let your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000).
- Valerie Bridgeman, "Commentary on Genesis 1:1-5," *Working Preacher*, January 7, 2018.

HYMN OF THE DAY God Has Spoken *(sung to the tune of Love Divine, All Love Excelling)*

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|--|---|
| <p>1 God has spoken through the prophets,
spoken an unchanging Word;
each from age to age proclaiming
God the one, the glorious Lord!
In the world's despair and turmoil
one firm anchor still holds fast,
God the voice of power and splendor,
God alone the first and last.</p> | <p>2 God has spoken through Christ Jesus,
Christ the everlasting Son,
brightness of the Father's glory,
with the Father, ever one:
spoken by the Word incarnate,
God of love, before all time
light of light, to us descending,
word of man and Word divine.</p> |
| <p>3 God is speaking by God's Spirit
speaking to the hearts of all.
In the age-long Word proclaiming,
hear God's voice and hear God's call.
Through the rise and fall of nations,
one sure faith is standing fast:
God abides, God's love unchanging,
God the first and God the last.</p> | |

CONFESSION OF FAITH Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

OFFERTORY

Offerings may be mailed to the church (5929 Brooklyn Blvd, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429), or given online at www.crossofglory.us. Thank you for continuing to support the work of Cross of Glory during this time apart!

OFFERTORY RESPONSE Word of God Speak

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|--|
| <p>1 I'm finding myself at a loss for words
And the funny thing is it's okay
The last thing I need is to be heard
But to hear what You would say</p> | <p>Chorus</p> | <p>Word of God speak
Would You pour down like rain
Washing my eyes to see Your majesty
To be still and know
That You're in this place
Please let me stay and rest
In Your holiness (Word of God speak)</p> |
| <p>2 I'm finding myself in the midst of You
Beyond the music beyond the noise
All that I need is to be with You
And in the quiet hear Your voice</p> | | |
| <p>I'm finding myself at a loss for words
And the funny thing is it's okay</p> | | |

OFFERING PRAYER

O God, receive these gifts as you receive us: like a mother receives her child, with arms open wide. Nourish us anew in your care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ, our saving grace. **Amen.**

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE

Let us lift our voices together as we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need...

God of water and Word,

We lift our voices to give you thanks for the gift of our baptism, for the ways your divine presence meets us in the ordinary--in bread and wine, water and word. As we remember our baptisms, empower us to rise anew each morning in a daily baptism, using our voices to echo the sound of your creative, loving, and transformative Word. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We lift our voices to give you thanks for this church, for the voices of care, compassion, and courage among us here at Cross of Glory. Bless all those who serve on council and committees, those who make phone calls and offer prayer, those who care for our building and budget, for all those who share of their time, money, and gifts for the sake of our life together here. As we head into this new year, renew us in our mission and our ministry, that this might be a place where all your beloved children experience your welcome and your love. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We lift our voices to pray for wilderness and waters, for wind and wild beasts, and for all living things on earth. Just as your Spirit swept over the waters in the beginning, your Spirit dances through creation still. Move us to care for this creation and work for a world in which all have bread to eat and clean water to drink. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We lift our voices to pray for world leaders and elected officials. Grant them wisdom and humility as they use their voices to lead us. And we pray for all those in our communities whose voices we may not often hear, those whose voices are drown out, despised, or disregarded: for the undocumented, for the elderly and those who care for them, for children and those who care for them, for laborers, for the imprisoned, for the sick, for the poor. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We lift our voices to pray for all those who are suffering today. For our neighbors whose bodies ache, whose minds are troubled, and whose spirits yearn for companionship. We pray especially for Gil Hartlage, Terry Stejskal, Vicky Jacobson, Jeannie Kuzmich, for Sig and Grace, parents of Julie Aulwes, Nick, nephew of Lori Balzer, and Cindy, daughter of Dave and Nancy Hengel, and for the loved ones of Geri Kroll and Gerald Rowley, who both passed away in recent days. In the face of doubt, despair, and death, renew us with the baptismal promise of new life in you. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We speak all of these prayers--both silently and aloud--in the name of the God who was, and is, and will continue to speak in us. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

And now let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us...

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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

May the voice of God the Father keep creating within you,
May the voice of Jesus the Son remind you of your belovedness,
✠ May the voice of the Holy Spirit transform you and give you voice. **Amen.**

SENDING SONG

Remind Us

1 Remind us that the dark comes like
An angel of the light
Remind us though it's funny

2 Remind us that our treasure
Is the place our heart will be
Remind us that Your Kingdom

That it may not mean it's right
Remind us if we love this world
We cannot love You too
Remind us that the well of life
Is only found in You

Is not of the world we see
Remind us that abundance
Isn't meant to serve our greed
Remind us that the sowing
Is the purpose of the seed

Chorus

And we will remember
To walk in Your Spirit
To dwell in Your Word
And obey when we hear it
To drink from the well
That can quench all our thirst
To turn from what's evil and honor You first
And we will remember to love one another
To honor You Jesus by serving each other
To offer our lives as a true sacrifice
On the altar of worship to You so remind us

3 Remind us that the Church is one
Remind us that the Church is one
In spite of how we live
Remind us that the world will know us
By the love we give
Remind us that our unity
Will show the world the Son
Remind us that abiding in the Vine
Will make us one

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Remember your baptism!
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

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Worship Leadership:

Lead Pastor: Rev. Ali Tranvik
Pianist, vocalist: Mark Trease
Vocalist, choir director: Keith Williams
Lector: Dawn Bailey
Acolyte: Earl Simons
Tech Director: Ryan Bailey
Ministers: The people of Cross of Glory

<p>Congregational Support as of 11/30/2020 Annual Budget: \$225,000.00 Year to Date Budgeted: \$204,741.67 Year to Date Received: \$206,347.29 Difference: \$1,605.62</p>
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2021 Offering Envelopes are here!

If you are able, please stop by the church office Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday between 9:00am and 3:00pm to pick yours up! Thank you! You may also pick up your envelopes, along with Annual Reports in a couple weeks at a curbside pick up event. Stay tuned for more information.