

First Sunday after the Epiphany
January 10, 2021

Rather an epic week, don't you think? Epic times gives us much to pray for. Let us pray today for our nation, pray for healing, pray for the way to be made clear to common ground – pray to strength, strive for justice and peace among all people.

In the life of the church, I ask you to pray for Elizabeth Pickett, who was buried earlier this week. She and her husband Lawrence were once part of Trinity. I also ask for your prayers for Quinn Carol Kade, who will be baptized today. And I cannot think of a better day to do this baptism, as it is also the day we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus!

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
And blessed be God's kingdom, now and forever. Amen.

Let's pray this together.

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us now pray together the collect of the day.

Father in heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

First Lesson

Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the 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. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

The Response

Psalm 29

Afferte Domino

1 Ascribe to the Lord, you gods,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his Name;
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;
the God of glory thunders;
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

4 The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice;
the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendor.

5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees;
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

7 The voice of the Lord splits the flames of fire;
the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

8 The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe
and strips the forests bare.

9 And in the temple of the Lord
all are crying, "Glory!"

10 The Lord sits enthroned above the flood;
the Lord sits enthroned as King forevermore.

11 The Lord shall give strength to his people;
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

The Epistle

Acts 19:1-7

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—altogether there were about twelve of them.

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Mark.
Glory to you Lord Christ.

Mark 1:4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And 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. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He 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. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And 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. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Praise to you Lord Christ.

A Reflection

May the words written and the prayer of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. *Amen.*

A new year and a celebration of new beginnings. That sense of new beginnings strikes me in so many ways. And the reading from Genesis grounds us right in a new beginning. We read, "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the 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."

It may not seem like much yet, being a formless void and all covered by darkness, but I think of it as something God maybe looks at in the same way we look at unopened gifts under the tree on Christmas. With a touch of excitement, wondering what is this gift going to be?

Sometimes, gifts can be complicated and require some assembly as you figure them out. Sometimes there are unexpected parts, maybe even sharp parts, that may hurt you a bit as it is assembled. Sometimes some tools may be required for assembly.

But sometimes it is as easy as "Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night." And, therein, we have the gift of a beginning.

Baptisms are a beginning, also. We declare (often with the voice of our godparents!) that we intend to live life with Christ to guide us. When we hear of Jesus' baptism in the Gospel today, I feel it would be fair to say he was not baptized in the pretty picture we now often create with each baptism. No Godparents, I suspect, no pretty lace baptism gown, no party afterward.

But the gift is still there, as is the new beginning. In this act of baptism, Jesus received the mantle of who he is, and all he can be, and all he is.

So even without all the Kodak moments, we are so quick to provide, we are offered, “And 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. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

In Rachel Held-Evans’ remarkable book *Searching for Sunday*, she explores all of the sacraments in a wonderfully accessible way. On Baptism, she offers, “Baptism reminds us that there’s no ladder to holiness to climb, no self-improvement plan to follow. It’s just death and resurrection, over and over again, day after day, as God reaches down into our deepest graves and with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead wrests us from our pride, our apathy, our fear, our prejudice, our anger, our hurt, and our despair.” So it’s not always a pretty picture. But a wonderful gift.

During a service where a Baptism is performed, we would usually renew our Baptismal vows – a renewal of that gift. I would ask the congregation things like “Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?” and for all of the questions in the renewal of the Vows, you would respond, “I will, with God’s help.”

With God’s help – we can’t do this ourselves – too much of life gets in the way. God reminds us and helps keep us on track.

Some of the questions are difficult. “Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?” What does sin mean to you? How do you resist it? May you define sin as those things in life that distract you from God’s desire for us, and our society offers so much of that! You respond, “I will, with God’s help.”

Another complicated one: “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being?” Complicated because we hear so much about others maybe not being deserving, or too much attention is being put on their “agenda.” Think about it for a moment - Black lives matter, Gays, Lesbians, Transgendered, women – all have been treated as deserving less than dignity, and in the last few years, even those who are not in your political party! I ask it again, “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being?” And you respond, “I will, with God’s help.”

(If you want to go over the rest of the questions in the Renewal of Baptismal vows, they are found on page 304 of your prayer book, which is also available online at [The Online Book of Common Prayer](#).)

So we have been given this gift. A gift Christ was given by John all those years ago. An amazing and exciting gift that shows us who we are. A gift to share with others. A gift that Rachel Held-Evans says is “It’s just death and resurrection, over and over again, day after day, as God reaches down into our deepest graves and with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead wrests us from our pride, our apathy, our fear, our prejudice, our anger, our hurt, and our despair.” A gift that has responsibilities and vows along with it.

What shall we do with this amazing gift? Let's find out together.

Let's offer one more vow for today's newly baptized.

Will you who know of these baptismal vows for Quinn do all in your power to support her in her life in Christ?

And the people say - *We will!*

Amen.

Let us now confess our sins against God and our neighbor. Praying together:

*Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.*

Let us end by praying as our Lord Jesus Christ taught us. Pray this as you will, out loud or to yourself – just know that God hears you.

*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,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

We will continue with the prayer of Spiritual Communion. This prayer was written by St. Alphonsus de Liguori. This prayer is now often used when the church is in a place of fasting

from Communion, and I have heard this used in many of the on-line services being offered. We will be using this prayer in place of Communion as we work on regathering, too.

Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. I love you above all things, and long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

Let us end today by praying for Quinn Carol Kade.

We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood. Amen.

Let us now go in peace to love and serve the Lord!
Thanks be to God – Alleluia!

Yours in Christ.
Dave+