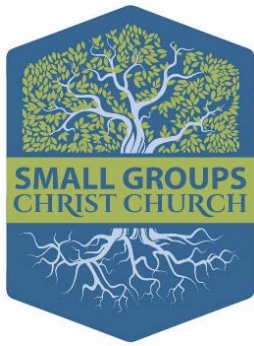


CHRIST CHURCH SMALL GROUPS

The Baptism of the Lord – The Week beginning January 12, 2025



Read Luke 3:15-17, 21-22:

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Background:

The baptism of Jesus is an important event in each of the gospels, heralding as it does the beginning of Jesus’ public life and marking him out as the beloved of God. Luke’s account of the baptism does not focus on the event itself but on its aftermath, i.e., the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus while he was at prayer. In describing it in this way, the evangelist is highlighting two themes that are central to his gospel. These are the role of the Spirit and the importance of prayer in Jesus’ life. For Luke, the fact that they are important in the life of Jesus means that they must also be important in the lives of his followers.

Talking Points:

- Luke presents us with a highly visual and mysterious scene—picture it in your minds—of Jesus and John in the river, crowds of followers around, and then from above the heavenly voice and the dove. In this picture, what stands out for you most of all?
- In the Service of Baptism in the Episcopal Church, the priest anoints the baptized with oil and says, “You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ’s own forever.” What does it mean to be “marked as Christ’s own forever?” What are the implications?
- “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I...will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16). What do you think John means by saying that Jesus will baptize you with “fire”?
- People “were filled with expectation” and questioning in their hearts if John the Baptist might be the Messiah. Do you have the expectation that Jesus will return? If you knew Jesus were to return next week, what would change about your life?

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.