

“Baptized and Sent”

A sermon by the Rev. Frances Savill

Sunday January 10, 2020 Baptism of the Lord

Scriptures: Genesis 1:1-5, Mark 1:1-11

I hope this morning that I might paint some pictures for you- that you might see and hear our scriptures anew.

We begin this second Sunday in the new year with Genesis – in the beginning God.

That is really the whole story in a nutshell.

In the beginning God.

God is the beginning of all things.

God is the beginning of our story, and every story.

There is no story before this one.

God is the originator.

If you like, the curtain comes up on a bare stage, and there is only God.

And God acts.

I read that God is better understood as a verb than a noun.

God is the initiator, God commands, God speaks, but first God moves over the waters of chaos.

These deep, dark waters threaten, but over them hovers the Spirit of God, and God creates, God brings life, God speaks and light and life appear.

The heavens and galaxies, the stars and the universe are formed.

Then the land was formed, and the animals, and all the birds of the air of the air and the fish in the sea, the crawling things and creeping things, the animals of every kind, and finally God created us. People, men and women, made in the image of God, God’s crowning work.

This morning we are invited to remember our beginning, to recall our baptisms, to touch the waters that drive us back to the beginning of our beginning.

We were created, and at our creation we were called good.

But we know that the story of creation did not end with our goodness.

Sin comes into the world.

And chaos threatens our world again – as we saw in the USA this past week.

If I asked you to tell me where I am this morning, some of you very clever people might give me answer something like this.

You are at Calvin Presbyterian Church, 401 First Ave, West in the city of North bay, in the Province of Ontario, in the country of Canada in the continent of North America, in the western hemisphere, on the earth, in the galaxy, the solar system, the universe, the Mind of God.

This morning we see how things work in the opposite direction also.

From the mind of God, we have God the Son descending to earth, becoming a man, being born in human likeness, raised as any of us, beginning his ministry.

From the Mind of God, through time and space, Jesus comes and lives among us.

We turn to Mark's gospel Chapter 1.

A prophet like the prophets of old comes on scene first; John the baptizer.

John is like Elijah, preparing the way of the Lord.

John ties together the past, the present and the future.

Jesus, Son of God, son of man comes onto the scene.

Jesus having come down from the Mind of God, enters the waters of chaos and sin that threaten to overwhelm us again.

When Jesus is baptized he has a connection back to the deep waters of creation. It is a heaven opening event. Jesus does what God does – he reopens the world and new life comes.

In *our* baptisms we are asked to enter the primordial waters and submit ourselves to a figurative death.

In the waters of baptism we go down into death, we die with Jesus, that we might also be raised with him in newness of life.

That's the symbolism we see when someone is submerged in baptism and then lifted up.

Jesus comes out of the waters of chaos that threaten us, and the heavens are opened, God speaks "you are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased."

In our baptisms, God calls us by name, names us daughters and sons, raises up to new life, a second birth.

So this morning I invite you to draw wet crosses on your foreheads, and remember your baptisms and give thanks. We are signed and sealed as children of God, baptized into the life and death of Jesus, and given new life in Jesus' name.

We are marked by God's love, we have experienced God's glory, and we are named beloved.

This is our beginning, and the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

Jesus will go from the waters, the moment of glory over, and he will live out his identity as the beloved Son of the Father.

He will make the Father visible.

He will reveal his Father's will.

He will teach and heal, and bring life and wholeness.

And he will lead the way for us.

We follow him into the world he loves.

Thanks be to God.