

Ps 29; Is 43:1-7; Acts 8:14-17; Lu 3:15-17, 21-22
Baptism of the Lord

Last week, we talked about the two sacraments of the United Methodist Church. Last Sunday we celebrated Holy Communion. Today we commemorate Holy Baptism. This is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Just to be clear in terms of history, Jesus was a Hebrew. He received the ceremony of the Bris (Brit Milah) eight days after He was born. That is, He was circumcised. He was baptized when He was about 30 years old. The God-man Jesus Christ received the waters of baptism. Let's just pause and appreciate His humility. The Ruler of the Universe submits to baptism? Why?

Jesus was there when the Holy Spirit hovered over the primordial waters. The Father said, "Let there be light,' and there was light." (Gen 1:3). The Son of God participated in that creation event. As a man of flesh and blood, He fulfilled all righteousness by being baptized. Circumcision is covenant in the flesh. Baptism is covenant in the soul – in the heart. Jesus said, "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did

not come to abolish, but to fulfill.” (Mt 5:17) So He ***has***, in every way, including His baptism. In our day, we keep the sacrament of Holy Baptism because Jesus showed us that it is good and right and holy to perform this outward sign of the inward grace of God.

Our Scripture lessons for the day don't emphasize the water of baptism. Water is mentioned, of course. John Baptist says that he baptizes with water. But our anointing – our consecration into God's covenant – our transformation is by fire. Water stands for cleansing. The purifying is done in the fire of God's glory – God's presence. No wonder Jesus was always saying, “Do not be afraid” and “Peace be with you. Facing fire is scary. The writer of Proverbs reminds us: “A crucible for silver, and a smelter for gold, and the LORD is the tester of hearts.” (Prov 17:3 CSB) In both the crucible and the smelter the precious metal is heated so impurities can be removed. When Moses saw the bush that burned but was not consumed, he removed his shoes – he bowed down and worshiped – but he was not burned as with the fire of earthly combustion – raped oxidation. The

fire of God's presence purifies but does not destroy.

Let's return to the day of creation. The writer of Genesis says: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." (Gen 1:1-3) Time had not yet begun.

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The waters of creation will not overwhelm you. No flood will overwhelm the world – by the promise of the rainbow.

The Lord will make a way through every river that cannot be crossed. God makes a way where there is no way for His people to follow Jesus Christ even into the New Jerusalem. Amen.