



Johnsville United Methodist Church

Union Bridge, MD

Our mission is to nurture the members of the congregation in developing a personal relationship with God and to share His word and His love with the larger community.

PRAISE, WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION

January 10, 2021

PRELUDE

“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” (Beethoven)

WELCOME

OPENING HYMN

“I Sing the Almighty Power of God”

UMH 152

1. I sing the almighty power of God,
that made the mountains rise,
that spread the flowing seas abroad,
and built the lofty skies.
I sing the wisdom that ordained
the sun to rule the day;
the moon shines full at God's command,
and all the stars obey.

2. I sing the goodness of the Lord,
who filled the earth with food,
who formed the creatures thru the Word,
And then pronounced them good.
Lord, how thy wonders are displayed,
where'er I turn my eye,
if I survey the ground I tread,
or gaze upon the sky.

3. There's not a plant or flower below,
but makes thy glories known,
and clouds arise, and tempests blow,
by order from thy throne;
while all that borrows life from thee
is ever in thy care;
and everywhere that we can be,
thou, God, art present there.

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Ascribe to the Eternal the glory due to God's name.

People: We bow down to the Holy One in the splendor of holiness.

***OPENING PRAYER**

Living God, when the Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism in Jordan's water you revealed him as your own beloved Son. You 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 Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior now and forever. Amen.

Special Music

"Amazing Grace"

Wayne and MacKenzie Trout

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Word of God, speak, for your servants are listening.

Spirit of creation and renewal, hover over our time together this day, as you hovered over creation on that first day.

Enter into our hearts and our lives, as you did on Jesus' day of baptism.

Descend on us like a dove, as you did on Jesus' day of baptism, that we may hear again your words of love and adoption.

Speak from the heavens into our minds, that we may perceive your words of guidance and wisdom.

Heal us and those we love, that all may be made whole in your son Jesus who taught his disciples to pray by saying...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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. Amen.

***Hymn**

"Morning Has Broken"

UMH 145

1. Morning has broken
like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken
like the first bird.
Praise for the singing!
Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing
fresh from the Word!

2. Sweet the rain's new fall
sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall
On the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness
Of the wet garden,
sprung in completeness
where his feet pass.

3. Mine is the sunlight!
Mine is the morning
born of the one light
Eden saw play!

Praise with elation,
praise every morning,
God's re-creation
of the new day!

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Hebrew Scripture 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.

Epistle Lesson: Acts 19:1-7

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. ²He 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." ³Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." ⁴Paul 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." ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—
⁷altogether there were about twelve of them.

Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:4-11

John 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."

Response to Scriptures:

Leader: This is the word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

SERMON

"Looking for Signs and Sightings of His Love"

Pastor Shari McCourt

In late December 2020, it was early in the morning when I was reading the newspaper, the old fashioned kind made of paper. I read the important things first, such as the obituaries to make certain that my name was not listed, and it was alright to start my day. Then I skip over to the comic section, because I like to start my day with a laugh, other than looking in the mirror. This was a joke my grandfather always told, and now I am living it. There was Family Circus comic staring right at me! The little girl from the comic strip was walking along with a piece of art in her hand singing at the top of her lungs, "O come let us ignore Him, O come let us ignore Him, O come let us ignore Him. . ." It reminded me of this time of year. All of the wrapping paper has been cleaned up, and many of us have taken down our Christmas trees. It is all over, it came and went, and it won't happen for another year. We are in the season of Epiphany, which means: manifestation of God, perception of God, or a time to look for God sightings. This is not the time to ignore Him! It is a time to look for God sightings, and the places we see Him in our lives. That "Him" is Jesus!

Today's gospel text from Mark, is preceded by the story of John the Baptist, who in this text is the one who baptized Jesus. The story began with John on the edge of the Jordan River in the Book of Matthew. Jesus came to him to be baptized. John trying to deter Jesus, says, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus responds, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." So John baptized Jesus.

John was baptizing people to cleanse them from their sins. The text does not include a confession of sin by Jesus. None of the texts have confessions of sins by Jesus, so for this reason and many others, the church has concluded that Jesus was without sin. Jesus gives the answer himself, when he tells John, "for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus told John that the baptism is in fulfillment of the scriptures from Isaiah 42:1-4. These are the **first** words Jesus spoke in the gospel.

Just as Jesus was baptized and came up from the water, the heavens opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. "¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'" Jesus was baptized not just by water but also by the Spirit of God! Like a dove God's spirit came upon him. The symbol of a "dove" is the biblical symbol of God's peace and reconciliation.

Jesus had to be baptized for many reasons. The first is an act of obedience to God and to be claimed as God's son, "**the Beloved**". This was a public act! Through baptism we are initiated into God's church and declared to be God's adopted children, and have Christ as our brother in God's family. Jesus had to be baptized to announce who "Jesus" is. We know that this is the "One" because Matthew quotes from Isaiah's Servant Song in Isaiah 42:6, "⁶I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people". Jesus was given to the people as fulfillment of God's covenant. God made with God's people a covenant an agreement . . . a promise of salvation, deliverance, healing and wholeness through the resurrection which initiates the newness of life in the new creation. Jesus inaugurates this new creation.

We are to remember that we are baptized because we are a part of God's family through the faith community. **God has claimed us as God's own!** This is not the time to ignore Him, but to look for sightings of the "One" who loves us more than we love ourselves.

In the last year and a half or so, three of my beloved family pet cats have passed.

When we came to a place of healing from our grief we adopted other cats, not to take their (my old cat's) place, because they were irreplaceable, but to be our new family members. Each of the cats came from rescue organizations. Some had been lost, abandoned, or abused and thrown away like trash. They all came to us unwell, and needed healing, love, and attention. It has taken time to help them to heal physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Our process is to ease them into the family slowly in order to build trust, and aid in their healing. When they first came into the family, they noticed each and everything that was done for them, and they expressed gratitude. They purred, and purred, and rubbed up against us to claim us, as cats mark their people. They seemed to notice each little thing such as a clean bed, and place to live. The cats were so grateful for each meal, and loving attention they received.

As other cats joined the family, there were signs of jealousy, they became less appreciative of all they have received. Don't get me wrong they are very loving cats. The difference is that instead of moving from their favorite place to share with the new cat or kitten, they resented having to share, and began taking for granted all that was done for them.

We, at times, forget all that God has done for us, get a little jealous when we feel as though we are displaced by someone new, and stop looking to see where God is present with us. This is a season of focusing on all that God has done for us, and looking for the signs and sighting of His love.

Remembering our baptism and adoption into God's family reminds us of the new social order. We all come to God from different places, with different experiences. Maybe we have felt as though we were abandoned, thrown away, or lead a life we think would make us unworthy of the salvation of Jesus the Christ. No matter what is going on in your life at this moment, you are in a good place today. We have all lived as sinful people who have missed the mark of Christian discipleship.

Today is a day to start the New Year, remembering who we are as God's family, and live looking forward to the wonderful signs of His love in our lives. Let us **not** sing like the little girl from the Family Circus cartoon, "O come let us ignore Him, O come let us ignore Him, O come let us ignore Him. . ." Instead, may we be about sharing with one another, and the world, the signs of gratitude we have for God's son, the One, the Beloved! Amen.

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS TO GOD

Many thanks for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of the church.

As an act of worship, please consider keeping current in your tithes and offerings. Even though the church building is closed, we still have financial obligations we need to meet. The mailbox will be checked daily. The address is: Johnsville United Methodist Church, 11106 Green Valley Road, Union Bridge, MD 21791

* DOXOLOGY

"Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"

UMH 94

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!

Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

***Offering Prayer**

(Genesis 1, Mark 1)

Spirit of power and strength, you called forth the world and pronounced it good.

Spirit of life and love, you sent Jesus to bless the world. Accept these gifts, that they may continue your work, creating a just world where all your beloved children may live in peace. Amen.

***Closing Hymn**

"Spirit Song"

UMH 347

1. O let the Son of God enfold you
with his Spirit and his love.
Let him fill your heart
and satisfy your soul.
O let him have the things that hold you,
and his Spirit like a dove
will descend upon your life
and make you whole.

Refrain

Jesus, O Jesus,
come and fill your lambs.
Jesus, O Jesus,
Come and fill your lambs.

2. O come and sing this song with gladness
as your hearts are filled with joy.
Lift your hands in sweet
surrender to his name.
give him all your tears and sadness;
give him all your years of pain,
and you'll enter into life in Jesus' name.

Refrain

*** BENEDICTION**

May we go forth living in the Spirit of the Love of the Lord. May we share it with all that we meet in His name and to His glory! Amen.

*** POSTLUDE**

"Jesus, Name Above All Names" (Hearn)