



## **"I'm Gonna Let it Shine! The Voice"**

### **Baptism of Our Lord**

Saturday & Sunday, January 11 & 12, 2020

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Matthew 3:13-17

Baptisms make me cry. I remember warning the parents of the first child I baptized here at Trinity that I might sob through his baptism, so I apologized in advance. Even just watching a baptism happen gets me teary eyed. I might get teary eyed right now. I cry because of the magnitude of this moment in the life of the person being baptized. I cry because this is the moment in which God claims the baptized as Beloved, as a child of God.

I think of this moment like God placing a nametag on each of us. The nametag reads: I am a beloved child of God. From this moment forward, the baptized are marked with the cross of Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit forever. And no matter what that oily cross and that nametag can't be removed. They are permanent just as God is permanent.

In our world, we need to hear that we are God's beloved as often as possible. We need to hear that God loves us as often as possible. Because our world is full of voices that try to tell us we are not loved that we are not worthy. Or in the words of Martin Luther: "We need to hear the gospel every day because we forget it every day."

It's why you'll hear me tell the kids in almost every children's message that God loves them. It's why I had a sign on my bathroom mirror in seminary that read: "Hey you! You're a beloved child of God." There are many voices in our world that we hear telling us something that isn't true; but the only voice that matters is *the Voice* – God's voice – that claims us as beloved.

But those voices persist. At the end of the day, we all have moments when we doubt our own worth. In college, I struggled with body image issues. I sought my worth from a number on the scale. As a young adult dating, I sought to find my own worth in relationships, I sought to find worth from another person. And today, in my role as your pastor, there are days when I wonder if I am worthy of that title.

There are voices in this world telling us that we aren't good enough employees, parents, friends, spouses. There are voices in our world telling us that we aren't attractive, skinny, popular or well-liked. We all question our self-worth at some point in our lives. We all wonder if we are worthy. Even John the Baptist does in our story for today; he questions if he is worthy to baptize Jesus.

But friends, ultimately, the only voice that matters is God's voice. Each of us, we have been claimed by God. We are God's beloved. We are worthy before God because in

baptism, we experience God's redeeming love and abundant grace, and we are named child of God. Our story for today from Matthew shows us the truth of who we are and to whom we belong because the words God uses to describe Jesus, God uses to describe us.

What I love about this story from Matthew is how it echoes Genesis, the beginning, the creation. Matthew writes that as Jesus came out of the water, the Spirit of God appeared, descending like a dove. The dove is Matthew's image for the Spirit of God moving over the waters at creation.

Steven Driver, a biblical commentator, writes about this moment in Scripture and I love what he says. He says: "The Word of God was present from the beginning and created the world. What the Word created was good. In Matthew, the Spirit of God once again hovers over the waters, and once again the Word of God speaks. Genesis describes God bringing order to chaos through (God's) Word. Matthew describes God taming the chaos of our sins through (God's) Word."

Now, I'd like to think in our baptism that yes, God tames our sins, but also God tames those voices that claim we aren't worthy. God shouts over those voices and calls us Beloved. God creates us as people worthy of love – God's love, the ultimate, amazing, best kind of love.

Our theme for this season of Epiphany is I'm Gonna Let it Shine. It comes from the African American spiritual *This Little Light of Mine*. My favorite verse from this song – and I don't think we sing it enough – is "hide it under a bushel, no, I'm gonna let it shine."

Whenever I think of this song, I think about kids I spent a lot of time with as a pastoral intern in Montana. The retirement community I interned at also had a daycare center and these kids were a part of the life of this community. One of their favorite songs to sing for the elders was *This Little Light of Mine* and they loved the verse about the bushel too. They loved that after they sang "hide it under a bushel," they got to yell "NO! I'm gonna let it shine!"

That seemed pretty powerful to hear and to sing. This little light of mine won't be hidden. Absolutely not. No voice in this world can tell us to hide it because there is a louder, more powerful voice in this world that has already claimed us, that has already said we matter, that has already said we are loved.

So, let it shine, friends because the Voice says so. Amen.

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