



Sermon, January 1, 2017
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Coburg and Junction City United Methodist Churches

“Remember Who You Are”

Scripture: Mark 1:1-11

- 1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- 2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
- 3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”
- 4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And 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. 6 Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He 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. 8 I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”
The Baptism of Jesus
- 9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And 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. 11 And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Recapitulate story of baptism of Jesus by John.

What’s going on here? [**Play video clip: Forrest Gump opening**]

Doug Adams of Pacific School of Religion pointed out (and then played for us) the opening sequence of "Forrest Gump." In that sequence, the first thing we see is a feather dislodging from a dove flying overhead. The feather wafts along, almost alighting on several "acceptable" people, finally settling on Forrest, sitting on the bench, waiting for the bus. From that beginning, you know that something is going to happen to this fellow, as substandard as he may seem at first. There’s something about that floating feather that tells us, “Pay attention! Listen up folks. Watch this guy!”

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Jesus is somebody to pay attention to, because he has been marked specially.

But this tells us something about what happens in baptism – not only to Jesus, but significantly to us.

Toy Story (1995): When Buzz Lightyear gets marked with the name of the one to whom he belongs on the bottom of his shoe. Woody looks at the bottom of his shoe, as a reminder and confirmation of whose he is.

Martin Luther when he was locked in the room of the house of his protector, wrestling with his conscience and theology and throwing inkpots at the devil, often suffered crises of faith. Was he loved? Was he acceptable to God? Was he justified? Then he would touch his forehead, where he had been marked with the sign of the cross at his baptism and he would remember: "I am baptized."

Baptism is that marking, that naming and claiming by God. "You are mine."

When I say that God says, "You are mine," it does not mean that we are possessions like Woody the toy cowboy. Rather, it means that we have entered into a Life that is beyond our small, miniscule, finite lives. God says, "This is my Son." And so Jesus is God's Son in a way that is unique. But we are likewise named and claimed by God. God's mark is placed upon us in baptism in a way that gives us a deeper identity than that we once had. And so baptism begins the task of finding out who we are at that deep, profound level of the core of our being. But the problem is, we don't automatically know who we are fully.

In Toy Story 2, Woody is kidnapped and taken to the apartment of the "bad" toy store owner. Woody finds himself in a dark room, all alone. And then he hears the voice of a young girl who recognizes him. This toy, Jessie, the yodeling cowgirl, a similarly dressed western cowgirl, gets very excited that "Woody" is finally here. Woody asks, "How do you know me?" She replies, "Do you not know who you are?" She then turns on a light and shows Woody the shelves that are filled with Woody memorabilia. Woody finds out he was a famous movie star. She shows

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him old cartoons and Woody watches with great joy. So it is in baptism. God knows us before we know who God is, and in this sacrament we are told who we are....a child of God."

But we can forget who we are and we can forget whose we are.

The Lion King (1994) [**Play video clip: Lion King - Remember**]

Simba is also called back to his baptism when the baboon takes him to the lagoon to show him his father. Simba sees the reflection of himself, saying that it isn't his father, it's just a reflection of himself. Rafiki says "Look harder, he lives in you." When Simba looks again he hears the voice of his father saying: "Simba, you have forgotten who you are, you are more than you have become, Remember who you are..."

Remember who you are.

Today, as we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, we also celebrate our own baptisms. We take this time to remember who we are and whose we are. We remember that it is God who has called us, and it is God who marks us even as our bodies are marked by the traces of water.

Remember who you are.

Remember.