



Baptism of The Lord (Year B)



Mark 1: 7 – 11

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. In his preaching 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. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 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. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

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Reflection:

Mark begins his Gospel in the most dramatic way possible...“The heavens torn apart,” the Spirit of God descending and a voice from on high. If you like the dramatic, there is no grander entrance than this. Baptism is our grand entrance into the world as well. Each time a person a child is united to Christ in Baptism, God parts the heavens and sends forth his spirit and proclaims, “You are my son/daughter, you are much loved; I take great pleasure in you.”



Table Discussion (at mealtime):

God takes pleasure in us. He delights in who we are. Take a moment to share what you see in one another that is reason for delight.

And/or:

Spend some time talking about your child’s baptism (where did it take place, who came, the baptism itself, the events of the day, photos, baptismal candle, baptism gown, etc.).

And/or

Tell your child, why you had them baptized.



Father's Love Letter to you (Bedtime letter):

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My Child,

You may not know me, but I know everything about you (Psalm 139:1). I know when you sit down and when you rise up (Psalm 139:2). I am familiar with all your ways (Psalm 139:3). Even the hairs on your head are numbered (Matthew 10: 29-31), for you were made in my image (Genesis 1:27).

In me you live and move and have your being (Acts 17: 28), for you are my child (Acts 17:28). I knew you before you were conceived (Jeremiah 1: 4-5). I chose you when I planned creation (Ephesians 1: 11-12).

You were not a mistake for all your days are written in my book (Psalm 139: 15-16). I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live (Acts 17: 26). You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139: 14). I knit you together in your mother's womb (Psalm 139: 13) and brought you forth on the day you were born (Psalm 71:6).

I have been misrepresented by those who do not know me (John 8: 41-44). I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love (1 John 4: 16) and it is my desire to lavish my love on you (1 John 3: 1), simply because you are my child and I am your Father (1 John 3:1).

I offer you more than your earthly father ever could (Matthew 7: 11), for I am the perfect father (Matthew 5:48). Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand (James 1: 17), for I am your provider and I meet all your needs (Matthew 8: 31-33). My plan for your future has always been filled with hope (Jeremiah 29: 11), because I love you with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31: 3).

My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore (Psalm 139: 17-18), and I rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3: 17). I will never stop doing good to you (Jeremiah 32: 40), for you are my treasured possession (Exodus 19: 5). I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul (Jeremiah 32: 41), and I want to show you great and marvelous things (Jeremiah 33: 3).

If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me (Deuteronomy 4: 29). Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4), for it is I who gave you those desires (Philippians 2: 13). I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine (Ephesians 3: 20), for I am your greatest encourager (2 Thessalonians 2: 16-17).

I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles (2 Corinthians 1: 3-4). When you are broken hearted, I am close to you (Psalm 34: 18). As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart (Isaiah 40:11).

One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes (Revelation 21: 3-4), and I will take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth (Revelation 21: 3-4). I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son, Jesus (John 17:23); for in Jesus, my love for you is revealed (John 17: 26). He is the exact representation of my being (Hebrews 1: 3). He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you (Romans 8: 31), and to tell you that I am not counting your sins (2 Corinthians 5: 18-19).

Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled (2 Corinthians 5: 18-19). His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you (1 John 4: 10). I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love (Romans 8: 31-32).

If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive me (1 John 2: 23), and nothing will ever separate you from my love again (Romans 8: 38-39). Come home and I will throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen (Luke 15: 7).

I have always been Father, and will always be Father (Ephesians 3: 14-15). My question is... Will you be my child? (John 1: 12-13). I am waiting for you (Luke 15: 11-32).

Love,

Your Dad,

Almighty God.

Suggestions:

- For younger children, you may want to split up the letter into shorter parts, focusing on one or two paragraphs and their content. This may also lead to more intense thought and potential questions or topics for discussion.
- For older children, you may want to give them the passages to look up. Remember that, in many instances, this letter paraphrases or encapsulates the basic thought of the passage. It also follows a particular English translation of the Bible, so the wording may not be exactly the same.
- You may also want to reduce the length of the letter or copy out your child's favourite part. In this way they can frame it or keep it in some form for future reference.
- You might like to watch the video of The Father's Love Letter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHBQQHSbavY>

Most importantly:

- Now that you and your child have received a love letter from your Heavenly Father, you may want to write him a letter in return,
or,
for younger children, draw a picture,
and/or,
you may want to write your child(ren) a love letter, too.

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.

Amen.



Children and their prayers:

You may want to take some time to help your child memorize one or two standard prayers. These prayers are best learned at home with the support of those around them. The "Lord's Prayer" is a wonderful place to begin. It emphasizes our relationship to God as child to a loving Father. By using the first person plural, it also reminds us that we pray not only by ourselves, or even for ourselves, but in unity with all God's people for the daily needs of all peoples and the healing and reconciliation that needs to take place, not only in our own home but in homes, communities and nations throughout the world. In this way, Jesus' prayer (found in Matthew 6: 9-13), not only unites us to a common Father but unites all peoples together.

Suggestion:

Make an art project out of it and hang it in their room.