**Daily Baptism Sun 9th Jan 2022 – Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22.**

Picture with me the scene: there are crowds of people waiting at shores of the River Jordan. It’s a warm sunny day. Children are running and playing at the water’s edge; some are digging in the sand. Perhaps there are few reeds rustling gently in the wind. Close your eyes and imagine yourself in the crowd.

It’s a long line up of people, but everyone is in good spirits – no one is getting impatient. They have all come to get baptized by this man called John. Everyone there understands that baptism is a important symbolic act of cleansing – it’s a chance to make a statement that you want to commit to the laws of God in anticipation of the coming Messiah.

They are rumours in the crowd that perhaps John might even be this Messiah that everyone has been expecting. Someone in the crowd must have asked him the question – “Are you the Messiah?” because you hear John shouting out in his gruff voice:

“I am not the Messiah. I am not worthy to even untie the Messiah’s sandals.”

Folks around you begin to laugh at this comment, but John scolds those who are laughing. He shouts at them:

“I only baptize you with water, but one will come who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

You hear folks around you whisper and asking each other questions: “What does he mean baptized by the Holy Spirit?”

“Isn’t it just prophets that are baptized in the Spirit?”

“How is it possible for everyone to receive God’s Spirit?”

Then in the middle of the crowd you see this man called Jesus of Nazareth coming to the water’s edge - the carpenters son. It’s clear that John recognizes him, because suddenly John is bowing down at Jesus’ feet. You are too far back to hear what they are saying, but you can tell that Jesus is insisting. Then you see Jesus enter the water; John calls out to God; and he immerses Jesus in the water.

But what comes next is extraordinary. The sky suddenly gets so bright. People around you are shielding their eyes – and you are sure that you hear a voice saying: “You are my son whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

People around you are looking confused.

Where was that voice from? Was this the voice of God?

There is a surge of energy around you.

Everyone is excited.

Have ears and hearts been opened to experience the Spirit of God?

Is this what it means to be baptized in the Spirit?

Somehow, in that moment, you begin to understand that Baptism is more than just a ritual cleansing – it is a blessing from God.

You’ve seen that even this Jesus receives this blessing.

And as you walk away from the banks of the river, you begin to understand that the blessing of baptism is not just a one time event, but it’s a daily blessing.

Now move forward in time with me. (move to font)

We do not come to the River Jordan to be baptized, but our symbolic act of Baptism is no different.

We gather around the font – our symbol of baptism today.

Take a moment to remember a baptism that you have been part of. Perhaps it was that of your child, or grandchild;

perhaps you have been a God- parent;

perhaps you recall making promises as a member of the Community of Faith.

As I pour the water, remember the words that were said: (pour water)

*May God’s Spirit be upon us, and upon these waters.*

*Listen to the water’s free-flowing powers;*

*Listen to its releasing powers;*

*Listen to its welcoming powers.*

Through the blessing of water, (lift water through fingers) we remember that we are blessed with the Spirit of God.

Just as the Spirit came down to Jesus in his baptism, so too are we blessed with the Spirit as children of God.

It is a Spirit filled with Grace that forgives us again and again when we fall down.

It is a Spirit that lovingly calls us by name to come and be in relationship with the Divine.

It is a Spirit that guides us, as we try to live as Christ’s disciples, following in Jesus footsteps and teachings.

And it is a Spirit that empowers us to accept Christ’s ministry of love, peace, and justice in the world.

Our act of baptism is not an act of cleansing, or a onetime event.

It is not an act of naming us.

It is a blessing of the Divine Spirit from God, a blessing that we can receive again and again.

It is a daily baptism!

Think about that for a moment.

How wonderful that we can be blessed by God every day!

How wonderful that we can experience the holy presence of God through our worship and our lives.

Not just on the day of our baptism, but every day!

And when we do realize how God daily fills us with the Spirit, then we are able to walk in the Spirit.

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he reminds them that walking in the Spirit means:

* Acting in humility, gentleness, patience, and love (Ephesians 4:2)
* Working together in unity (4:3)
* Listening to God calling us into hope (4:4)

And living in the Spirit also means accepting the commission to share God’s Spirit with others.

When Jesus was baptized in the Spirit, he began his ministry – his commission.

In the first letter of Peter we are reminded that because God’s Spirit lives in each of us as God’s children, then we are a part of a universal prophethood, commissioned to “*be God’s instruments to do God’s work and speak out for God, telling others of the night-and-day difference God has made for you*” ([1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%202.9)).

At our act of baptism we make promises:

* To follow in the way of Jesus Christ, speaking against oppression and seek justice,
* To celebrate God’s love and presence by living with respect in creation
* To love and serve others.

These are not promises that we make on one special day.

They are promises that we make for every day.

And we are blessed with God’s Spirit every day to fulfill these promises.

So today, as we remember the baptism of Jesus, the beginning of his Ministry, and his blessing of the Spirit from God, I invite you to pause to reflect on baptism.

As Eric plays ‘Spirit of the Living God,’ take a moment to pour a jug of water into a bowl, let the water rinse through your hands, or bring the water over your face and head, and take a moment to renew your promises:

to live in the Spirit,

to speak out for God,

to love and serve others,

and to celebrate God’s presence each and every day.

*Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.*

*Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me.*

*Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.*

(INSERT MUSIC MINISTRY VIDEO)

As you continue in these uncertain times, remember daily that you are blessed through baptism of the Spirit. And when things seem difficult, pause, run water through your hands, and intentionally remember that this is a daily baptism, for you to experience God’s blessing each and every day. Amen.