



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

January 1-7, 2018

Baptism of the Lord

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester:

Come and See: The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Notes from sermon on 12/31:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Question (before sermon):

What is the difference between baptism with water alone (John's baptism; see Acts 19: 3, Mark 1: 8) and baptism with the Holy Spirit (baptism into Jesus; see Acts 19: 4- 5, Mark 1: 8)?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

1. Why is it still important to use water in baptism?
2. What does water mean in your daily life?
3. What difference does the Holy Spirit make in baptism?
What difference does the Holy Spirit make in your daily life?

Monday, January 1: NEW YEAR'S DAY/8th DAY OF CHRISTMAS: Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

This special week we have not one, but three sets of lectionary readings from which we can choose our scripture passages for the GPS – one for New Year's Day, one for the Epiphany of the Lord on January 6, and one for this upcoming Sunday, the celebration of the Baptism of our Lord. Therefore, before we prepare for Doug's sermon on Sunday focusing on Christ's baptism from the Gospel of Mark, we will pause on this first day of the new year with this familiar passage from the New Year's Day lectionary readings. Here, the writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us of the importance of time, and God's hand in all of it.

Perhaps this past year was a time of birth, dancing, laughter, embracing, and love for you. Maybe it was a season of mourning or weeping. None of us knows what the upcoming year will bring. All we can be certain of is that our loving God is aware of every moment of our lives, has sent the Son and the Spirit into

our world and into our hearts to heal, love, comfort, and strengthen us, and wants us to enjoy our lives, now and forever. As children of God, we can all therefore rejoice in the assurance of a happy New Year!

Tuesday, January 2: 9TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: Read Mark 1: 4-8

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest and most action-packed of the four gospels, perhaps written with a Roman audience in mind who appreciated brevity, decisiveness, power, and just a little mystery. In past weeks, we have read from the gospels of Matthew and Luke of Christ's birth and childhood. Today, we read with anticipation today of the beginning of Christ's ministry on earth. Mark's gospel begins not with a baby but with a mysterious messenger, calling us to repent and prepare for an unimaginably powerful person's arrival who will have the power to wash away our sins permanently and baptize us with the Holy Spirit. He's got our attention. Something great is about to happen, and something great has already happened. On this second day of 2018, how can we live with excitement, joy, and anticipation as baptized followers of Christ because of everything that has already happened for us and everything that will happen for us?

Wednesday, January 3: 10TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: Read Mark 1:9-11

In three short verses, we are introduced to Jesus, witness his baptism, learn he is God's son with whom God dearly loves and finds happiness (see the Common English Bible translation of verse 11). What does Jesus being the Son of God mean for us, though? Our reading today ends in a cliffhanger, a teaser, for what's ahead, urging us to read on to discover what this son of God is really like, wish Mark had spent as much time describing Jesus as he had John the Baptist, and find out what twists and turns in God's plot lie ahead...and there are many. From this point on, Jesus sets to work on his whirlwind three-year ministry on earth that changed everything, for everyone, forever. The Gospel of Mark is a great place to start if we have not read an entire book of the Bible in a while, or to recommend to a friend -a great resolution!

Thursday, January 4: 11TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: Read Acts 19: 1-7

The importance of the baptism of our Lord is reinforced today in the book of Acts, as we see the great difference between simply going through a ritual to ask for the forgiveness of sins and being baptized in the name of Christ and receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts is another whirlwind book filled with incredible acts of the Holy Spirit working through ordinary men and women to change the world. How amazing it is to realize that we have that same Spirit in us, today, ready to change our world in 2018 through us! We, too, can utter the same words John Wesley used whenever facing trouble or doubt: "But I am baptized!" These words hold power, mystery, and reassurance that we are beloved children of God, commissioned for our own earthly ministry with a guaranteed eternal victory. What can our year be like if we live every day in response to this amazing information?

Friday, January 5: 12TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: Read Genesis 1:1-5

Light. We've seen this theme everywhere in the past month, ranging from tacky lights strung throughout Richmond to the single candle lit on Christmas Eve. During the dark winter solstice, we see the earth plunge into its darkest day of the year, then each day afterwards become a little lighter, the sun revealing itself earlier and earlier and staying with us a little longer each evening. We know that light comes from God, and Christ is our light. As many of us pack up our strings of Christmas lights and decorations for storage until next year, let us recognize the greater light that grows in us and in our world every day and ask God to let that light shine through us stronger than ever this year as baptized disciples of Christ.

Saturday, January 6: EPIPHANY: Read Matthew 2:1-12

We have seen the light of the Holy Spirit in Christ's baptism, and today we return to the manger to celebrate the light of Epiphany, with all of the promise and pageantry and mystery of wise men from the East recognizing something incredible in a tiny baby. Let us look for the light of God in everything we do this year- guiding our paths, illuminating the value and potential of others, and empowering us to be disciples of Christ for the healing and transformation of our world.

Sunday, January 7: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *God of all glory, you look from heaven and see us as we are— not worthy to kneel at*

your feet, not ready to welcome your way. Forgive us, gracious God. In Christ, stoop down to save us; loosen the ties that bind us to sin and set us free to love and serve you; in Jesus' name. Amen.