

Reflection on Luke 3:21-22
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It doesn't take much for me to get confused. Tell me a phone number, and by the time you get to the end of it, I have no idea what the first few numbers were or at least what order they are supposed to follow. Give me a row of ten people who I should know the names of, and chances are by the time I get to the middle of the line, I won't be able to recall the name of that person to save my life. Put lots of characters in a novel and you can be sure that I will be mixed up about who is who and who did what to whom when, where, and why.

So, it's not really surprising that just two verses of scripture from the Book of Luke have me scratching my head. It's just two verses that tell a simple story. Jesus is down by the Jordan River with others who have been paying attention to John's preaching. At least, I assume he's by the river because that's where a few of the other gospels place this story. All the people have been baptized, and Jesus gets baptized too. And then, as Jesus prays, something like a dove comes from the skies and a voice comes from heaven saying "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Okay, so even though it's a bit weird, I can see the scene with the James Earl Jones voice of God speaking from heaven. And I can see the beautiful dove drifting on the currents of God's breath.

But, here's what confuses me. Why was Jesus there to be baptized in the first place? The others were there to repent, to ask forgiveness and turn away from their sin into a new way of living. At least, that's what John was preaching to them. And, Jesus is the one without sin. So, what is he doing?

In my wonderment and confusion, I don't know that I have a good answer to the question. But, it seems to me it is at this point that Jesus begins a different part of his life. As far as we know from scripture, up until this point, Jesus has led a private life. He is a carpenter, learning from and working with his dad. He is a Jew who practices his faith. And so far, that's all. But, this is the moment when his life changes. He goes into the water as his own person, doing his own thing, going his own way, and comes out of the waters as God's person in a whole new way, a truly public figure.

And, in this moment, I believe he says to us that by going through the waters of baptism, he is joining us in all things...through the waters of life and death into abundant and eternal life. He is not going to stand apart from us on the shore of the river, shouting encouragement to us or making grand statements. No, instead, he is going to get in there with us so that we know he is with us in all that we are, in all situations into which we are called in our lives, into all experiences.

So, the chaos of the waters is where Jesus finds himself because it is where we find ourselves. The currents pull us in ways we never would have imagined and sometimes pull us into situations we never wanted. We are pulled into a diagnosis of cancer or into the pain of a divorce or into financial crisis or into the death of a loved one or into the deep pit of depression or into a death-giving relationship or so many other places. Or the current sweeps us into a new calling that both excites us and scares us to death. Or the current washes us into an incredible place of joy. By going down into the waters of baptism, Jesus says to us, "I am with you. I have been in these currents, and I am with you always, through all things."

And by being baptized ourselves, we say, yes, we are God's and through Jesus Christ, we acknowledge that we belong to God in all times, in all places, in all

situations. We know that in the baptismal waters, we affirm that through God's grace, our lives are not our own, and we are not alone. We are God's, and for that, we are truly grateful. We also know that with baptism comes an incredible calling. Because God pours out God's incredible love, presence, and mercy on us, we respond, through our baptisms, with our lives. We are the people of Jesus Christ, and we live, following him.

In the next few moments, I ask you to ask yourself what it means that Jesus shares baptism with you, that Jesus went down into the currents of the water with you, and came out of the water in incredible newness. What does this newness mean for you?

I invite you to come to the water of your baptism. Come to God's life giving water. God calls us to the water to find a new grace, a new hope, a new faith, a new life. Come to the water and let go of the outworn: outworn habits, outworn pains, outworn angers, outworn burdens. God blesses the water and it heals us, cleans us, renews us, refreshes us. Come to the water, just as Jesus did. Receive blessing, freedom, mercy, and love.

In these next meditative moments, as you ponder your own baptism and Jesus' baptism, I invite you if you would like to come to the font. Within the waters, you will find a piece of smooth glass. Reach in, feel the waters wash over your hand, just as the grace of God washes over our lives, and choose a piece that will remind you that you are God's, that will remind you whose you are and what your calling in these days might be. Come to the water.