



Worship Service:
Sunday after Epiphany: Jesus' Baptism and Water

Helpful Elements:

Green tablecloth (Ordinary Time)
Water pitcher (unbreakable) with water in it
Shallow bowl
River stones and/or smooth beach glass

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time. Today we are celebrating the **Baptism** of the Lord Jesus, the day that John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. We'll have a chance to reaffirm our own baptisms and to think about **water** in general. Thank you for joining us.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask that your Holy Spirit bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Suggested Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Amazing Grace

First reading: Mark 1: 2-11

²As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,

³the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”

⁴John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to John and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ... ⁷And John preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

⁹In those days Jesus came from Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And when Jesus came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens open and the Spirit of God descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven saying, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: Genesis 1: 1-10 – God’s creation of water

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ...

⁶And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷And God made the expanse and separated the waters under and above it. And it was so. ⁸And God called the expanse Heaven.

⁹And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Softy and Tenderly

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let’s talk more about baptism and water. In all religions, water is considered a sacred substance, part of the original creation and absolutely necessary for life.

- What can water do?
 - Quench thirst; refresh; make alive; even resurrect something, like a plant; cleanse; slowly smooth, like river stones or sea glass.
- Many religions use baptism in some form. What kinds of baptism are there?
 - Pastor, priest, poured over head, sprinkled on a baby, full immersion
- Where might a baptism take place? If you were baptized, where did that happen?
 - At church, in a river, at home, in a hospital
- If water is used for life and cleansing, I wonder what baptism symbolizes?
 - New life, cleansing from sin, a commitment to and relationship with God

Today, if you'd like, you can reaffirm or remember your own baptism; or you may simply reflect on the blessing of life-giving water and God's work in your life.

As the Methodist liturgy says, "Through the reaffirmation of our faith, we renew the promise declared at our baptism and acknowledge what God is doing for us." I'll walk around with the water, which you can use to make the sign of the cross on your forehead if you like. Or you may simply touch or scoop up the water to enjoy its coolness.

- *Pour water from pitcher into bowl with smooth stones and beach glass.*
- *Pray aloud: "Lord God, pour out your Holy Spirit to bless this gift of water and those who receive it."*
- *Put on hymn music; walk around to let residents touch water one at a time.*

(Silent Prayer) ... Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

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. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

This is My Father's World

It is Well with My Soul

Standing on the Promises

Third Reading: "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," by Langston Hughes, 1920

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln

went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy

bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Suggested Hymns:
Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing
Shall We Gather at the River

Fourth Reading: Two lighthearted stories about baptism 😊

One day, after a hard rainstorm filled all the potholes in the streets and alleys, a young mother watched her two little boys playing in a large puddle.

The older of the two boys, a 5-year-old lad, grabbed his little brother by the back of his head and shoved his face into the water hole. As the boy recovered and stood laughing and dripping, the mother ran to the yard in a panic.

“Why on earth did you do that to your little brother?” she asked.

“We were playing church, Mommy,” the older boy said. “I was just baptizing him in the name of the Father, the Son and ... in the hole-he-goes!”¹

A pastor said to a man about to be baptized: “Baptism is a serious step. Are you prepared for it?”

The man replied: “Yes. My wife made sandwiches and a cake.”

The pastor said: “I am talking about the condition of your spirit.”

The man said: “Oh, that. I have two bottles of vodka and some scotch.”²

Suggested Hymns:
Blest Be the Tie that Binds
I Need Thee Every Hour

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

¹<http://www.cleanjoke.com/humor/Boy-Baptism-.html>

² from <http://www.mrjam.org/2010/02/10-best-christian-jokes.html>

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise