

Isaiah 43:1-7  
Psalm 29  
Acts 8:14-17  
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

## Sermon January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### *Jesus Breathes New Life into Us*

The people who come to listen to John and receive the waters of baptism are coming with the hope that their circumstances will change. That they will experience something new. That the much-awaited messiah is finally here to bring justice and peace to their lives and to their world.

They hope for the day where they no longer have to worry about what they are going to do to get their next meal. They hope for the day where they no longer have to deal with the abuses they face, from tax collectors and soldiers. They hope for the day where they no longer have to live under Roman oppression. They hope for the day where they are seen as more than second class citizens. They hope for the day where they will be welcomed back into their community. They hope for a new day. They hope for new life.

Well, despite all this pressure to be the messiah. John sets the record straight. John is only a messenger (**Image**). John isn't the messiah. John is not able to offer the kind of change the people are looking for. John is not the one who will inaugurate this new day. John is not the one who will breathe new life into the people. John is here to prepare people for this day. So, I guess they are going to have to wait a little longer.

As the people's hopes fade a little from John's clarification, Jesus comes over the hill, and enters the waters to meet John. The messiah has arrived. The people's hopes are renewed. This change they are looking for is now possible. This new day, this new life, is now in reach.

Jesus receives the waters of baptism to inaugurate this new day (**Image**). To begin this new era. After his baptism, the Spirit descends on him while he prays. He then starts his ministry. He starts saying and doing things that will give people new life. From healing people from their sickness to forgiving people and reconciling them back into their communities. From feeding those living in poverty (**Image**) to teaching values that will lead people to create a society where those living in poverty are treated fairly. From welcoming the marginalized people in his community to raising his voice to the authorities with the hopes of changing the wider society. So, people will no longer be marginalized. From liberating people from their mental distress to challenging discriminatory norms (**Image**). Jesus gives people new life.

Maybe their circumstances don't change right away. Social change takes time. But how they are seeing and dealing with these circumstances has changed. They have

hope in God's promise that Jesus has come to make things right. That Jesus has come to breath justice and peace into their lives and into their community. They are able to be more patient, as Jesus gives them glimpses of this new life throughout his ministry.

Jesus' baptism is the start of something new. Jesus' baptism is the start of his healing and redeeming work that gives new life to so many people throughout the centuries. Including those of us gathered together today online and in-person.

As we reflect on Jesus' baptism. We remember our own baptism (**Image**). We remember the promise we received in our own baptism. Jesus will breathe new life into us through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus will make us new. Will change us. And this changing and renewing within us happens daily. Not just in the act of baptism. Because, God will be with us always.

Martin Luther reassured those he ministered to that the promises they received in their baptism were not a once in a life time experience. But that they experience the Spirit's power every day. They experience this promise of new life every day.

Right now, our world seems to be going through crisis after crisis. If it isn't the pandemic, it is some natural disaster (**Image**), or political strife, or some injustice that has finally been highlighted for all to see.

Right now, there is so much going on in our personal lives. From the breakdown of relationships to the struggles around job security. From the pain that comes with a cancer diagnosis to the grief that comes when someone we love dies (**Image**). From the loss of self that comes with dealing with dementia to the sadness that comes when someone we love starts to forget who we are. From the challenges that come with mental unwellness to the isolation that comes with being misunderstood (**Image**).

Right now, we are facing many struggles as a community of faith. From declining membership problems that have us worried about the future of our church to feeling exhausted, because we can't find enough volunteers to carry out our ministries. From watching our children and grandchildren face this world without faith to dealing with persecution when being open about our faith with others. From being limited in what we can do as a faith community during this pandemic to facing so much change in how we do things in our faith, and not always finding this transition easy.

There are a lot of reasons why we may be feeling a little more anxious these days. A little more longing for change. For new life.

In our gospel this morning, we are reassured that Jesus has come to give us this new life. Jesus has come to change us. To help us see God's healing and redeeming love happening in our daily lives.

In the gift of baptism, Jesus breathes new life on us through these waters. Through these words. Jesus promises us that this new life will impact us daily. Not just in the moment.

And it is through this promise that our eyes of faith open to see God's healing and redeeming love working in the here and now. Maybe our circumstances don't change right away, but we change.

We see things in a new light. We start to pay attention to the little details of where God is working. Whether it is in a word we hear in scripture or in the love we share with a friend. Whether it is in a song we enjoy singing (**Image**) or in the sermon we tentatively listen to. Whether it is in the feeling of being forgiven, the feeling of being renewed, that we get after communion. Or that feeling we get in living out our identity as Christ's disciple. Doing something good for someone else. Whether it is praying for those in our life who don't have faith. Or turning our focus from the disaster itself to those groups of people who are out helping people recover from this disaster (**Image**). Whether it is connecting with other faith communities who are trying to create peace and harmony in our city (**Image**). Or giving to research so we can do more to help people who suffer from cancer or dementia. Whether it is working towards being a more hospitable community for those who suffer from mental unwellness. Or seeking help when we need it.

God's healing and redeeming work is happening in our world, because Jesus is breathing new life into us everyday through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is changing us. Through his baptism and through our own, Jesus is doing something new to give us experiences of the foretaste to come.

Let us pray, loving God, we give thanks for your Son, whose baptism transformed our world into something new. We give thanks for our own baptism that transforms us into something new. May we feel Christ's breath of new life in us everyday. **Amen.**