

Father in heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

### **LOOK**

To whom do you look for approval? What was your experience during childhood of receiving approval (or not)? How did your family of origin show or not show love?

### **BOOK**

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

- 1) The baptism of Jesus is recorded in all four gospels, and all are slightly different. Luke has the dove descend on Jesus after his baptism, as he was praying. Why does Luke focus on that detail?
- 2) Baptism is about identity – not only Jesus, but John too. What did John learn about his identity when he baptized Jesus?
- 3) Why was Jesus baptized?

### **TOOK**

Describe the difference between being defined by what we do and defined by who we are. Why do you think we have so much difficulty placing value on 'being' and instead focus on earning or performing?

God gives us a choice about whether we accept our baptismal identity. Why do we so often refuse? What do we have to shed in order to live into this new identity?

Think for a moment about God's acceptance of you. Is there an image that comes to mind? If not, imagine yourself receiving the gift of being named God's beloved.

Accepting our identity as beloved children of God means that we also see everyone else as beloved children of God. Do you think we can do one without the other? Which comes first?

How do we model this new identity with each other and the world?

Paul Tillich: "Faith is our acceptance of God's acceptance of us even though we know we are unacceptable."

Fayette: "When I am baptized, I am beloved, a precious child of God, and beautiful to behold."

You don't have to try so hard. You don't need to prove yourself. You don't need to put up walls, or be so hard on yourself. You are loved. You are precious. You are enough. mkb