

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

Our nation was shaken by the events of January 6. With whom did you identify as you watched what unfolded?

BOOK

Mark 1:4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

- 1) Jesus is said to be without sin. Why did he need to be baptized?

- 2) Mark uses the Greek word 'schitzo' to describe the heavens tearing open. He only uses this verb one other time: at the tearing of the temple veil during the crucifixion. How does this inform your picture of baptism?
- 3) Do you think those around Jesus were aware of the voice and the heavens and the dove? Does it matter?
- 4) Jesus begins his ministry not by going to the temple authorities, but going out into the wilderness to a renegade prophet. How does this define his mission?
- 5) How is the baptism of Jesus also an acknowledgement of his identity?

TOOK

Each time we baptize, we also renew our own baptismal covenant. What do we say we believe? What do we promise? (hint: BCP 304-5)

Many people are asking themselves these days: Who are we as a nation? Who are we as individuals? As Christians? What identity do we claim in our baptism? How accessible is this identity for you in your daily life? How does your baptism matter in your everyday life?

How do you need God to tear open the heavens for you right now?

Will Willimon: "(accepting our baptismal identity) is nothing less than a daily, often painful death and rebirth." Death and birth are messy, earthy and painful. Also transformative and life-giving. Discuss baptism in these terms.

How does your baptismal identity inform and shape your response to current events? How does it call you to action?