

Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations... (Peace of drawing close to you)

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight, you who are rock and redeemer of us all. Amen.

Good Morning! Peace be with you! How is it with your soul? It is well with my soul.

Today we are called **to come up out of the depths of whatever seeks to keep us under and to know that we are beloved of God.**

*Let's begin with a prayer . God of the Way, give us willing hearts for the Lenten journey that lies ahead. Guide our steps and bring clarity and love more fully into our hearts. Teach us to focus on being up to something good for the goodness of this world. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight, you who are rock and redeemer of us all. Amen*

So a quick question for you... (If this is your first time joining in here, just know I ask questions)... what is your first memory of being immersed in water? Was it pleasant? Was it terrifying? Was it a planned choice or something that happened to you?

Water is the source of life...we need water... human bodies are made of water. Water is essential for life (as we understand it), but too much water can be just as devastating as too little water.

In the bible, we read how water flooded the earth while Noah and his family and two of every animal survived in the Ark so that the world would have a fresh start, a new beginning, at following God's way. Water is a symbol of new life, a fresh start. Water is used to cleanse our bodies, our dishes, our clothes. In the early days with God, water was used to represent turning from old habits to starting fresh and clean living according to God's way.

That's where we find ourselves in Mark's gospel...John the Baptist at the Jordan River calling the people to be baptized to demonstrate a change to their hearts and lives, confessing their sin and seeking forgiveness. In Verse 9, Jesus came from Nazareth and John baptizes him. This is Jesus' first action as he starts his ministry, to go down to the river.

We don't know what Jesus said, but the gospel is clear about what happened as Jesus comes up out of the water, the Spirit of God alights like a dove on him and a voice from heaven confirms Jesus' identity as Son and Beloved and says of Jesus 'with you I am well pleased'(v11). At once the Spirit drove him into the wilderness for 40 days, during which time Jesus was tempted by Satan, among the wild animals and tended to by angels. Meanwhile Cousin John is arrested and Jesus re-emerges calling for people to repent and believe the good news that the kingdom of God is at hand.

Whew! That's a lot of action, isn't it? What are we to make of this? What are we to take with us?

Well, let's look at our context. What are we up to? What's going on? The world is swirling in so much chaos; it's an election season; and well, maybe the fresh start with New Year resolutions has fallen by the wayside. O and it was Ash Wednesday this week. Yup, I'm naming all the things. If ever we needed a sign of the kin-dom of God to be at hand, surely it is now.

Yet, Right here, right now, God is up to something good! And right here, right now, God is calling each of us to renew and refresh our commitments to love and serve God and God's people be being up to something good.

God is calling us to “come up,” and that implies an opportunity to “go down” first: to bear witness to places of pain, to be in solidarity, to reflect honestly on where our pains and traumas are. Because when we do that, the words “You are my beloved” become so much more vivid and restorative. When we do that, we live into the kind of ministry Jesus was called into after his baptism.

We live in a world of distractions. And those distractions can numb us to where we are hurting. They can weaken our ability to withstand pain or the witness of others' pain. These distractions can lead us to ignore how God calls us beloved or, worse, lead us to believe we don't need to hear that kind of message.

We need to “come up” out of all of the things, pleasant OR painful, that are distracting us from the truth that God loves us, and that we need God's love; distracting us from the truth that God is calling us, and that God's call will send us to places that will be more uncomfortable.

So my first memory of being immersed in water was when I was about 4 or 5 years old. I was at a beach with my 3 or 4yo brother and our grandmother. All I remember was being knocked off my feet and tumbling forever (it seemed). I came up sputtering and shocked. Apparently my brother was tumbled too and my grandmother was able to

grab him up. That experience left an impact on me. I never wanted to swim much or get my face in the water. But I felt a pull to be a lifeguard. So at 15 I had to learn to swim with my face in the water so I could swim with my eyes out of the water. The point is... I had to trust that I would swim so that I could swim.

As the Psalmist cries out, “To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.” I learned to trust the water to hold me as I paddled through the water.

When we allow ourselves to face our fear of what practices God may be calling us into, we may discover that not only are we “up to” the task, but we are also buoyed by it.

Just like Jesus, we need to “come up” out of where we are stuck, or distracted, or delayed — because God loves us. And because God has some challenging places to send us. But those challenging places are also where miracles occur

Our act of “coming up” is also an offering to God. It is the first part of how we give ourselves to the one who loves us, and who created us.

Now we have water... and a family that will come up to begin a new relationship in covenant with God.

**Response to the Word** –

**Pastor Pat**

Let’s join together in a response to the Word as Eloise Laatsch and her family COME UP for her Baptism. **Come up, for now is the time to be fully who you are created to be for the sake of the world. The world needs what you have to give, needs what you are “up to” as a fully alive and passionate human.**

May it be so. Amen.

Now, Let us look to **Barbara Cook** who will lead us in the prayer for God’s people, the Lord’s Prayer and we’ll hear the offertory hymn.