



### Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 (NRSV)

<sup>15</sup>As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>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."

<sup>21</sup>Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, <sup>22</sup>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."

## Opening

- 1. Pray:** Gracious God, thank you for the water that cleanses and the Spirit that sustains. We confess that the world often leaves us feeling dusty, weary, and infected by worry. Wash us anew today. Help us to hear your voice calling us "beloved," and give us the strength to live out our baptismal promise in everything we do. Amen.
- 2. Share:** Is there a specific task or routine in your own life—like cleaning, organizing, or fixing something—that gives you a deep sense of "satisfying relief"?

## Dive Into the Text

- John the Baptist distinguishes between his baptism of water and Jesus' baptism of "the Holy Spirit and fire." What do you think is the difference between an outward cleansing and an inward, spiritual "fire"?
- In the ancient world, "threshing" (v. 17) was the process of separating the useful grain from the useless chaff. What are the "chaff-like" things in your life that God might be trying to clear away to make room for something better?
- Jesus entered the waters of repentance even though he was without sin. What does this "Defining Moment" tell us about his desire to stand in solidarity with us in our human struggle? The heavens opened while Jesus was praying after his baptism. How does prayer act as the "subtitles" that help us understand the meaning of our own baptism?

## The Mikveh

A Mikveh is a collection of waters. The Hebrew word means "collection or pool of gathered water." And a Mikveh was a ritual washing pool... The idea is that God washes away the things that make us not presentable to God, and really make us not capable of experiencing God's presence.

According to Orthodox Judaism, you shouldn't use pumped water or poured water. A Mikveh should be [naturally gathered] because it should be divinely orchestrated. So what better Mikveh than a pool in a river?

To be a baptized people is not necessarily to keep going back and keep being washed. It's to remember that faith in Christ is enough... and to live into the claim of our baptism is to seek justice and peace and love and reconciliation in the world.

Heckert, Chris (Rev. Dr.). "Remember Your Baptism."  
Sermon, Haddonfield United Methodist Church,  
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## Go Deeper

1. Why is it significant that a *Mikveh* required "living water" (naturally gathered) rather than water pumped in by humans? How does this reflect our need for God's grace?
2. The *Mikveh* transition was about becoming "presentable" to God. Do you ever feel "unpresentable" to God? How does the promise of your baptism answer that feeling?
3. John the Baptist moved the ritual from a private bath to a public river. How does this shift emphasize that repentance is a communal act for the sake of the "Kingdom of God"?
4. After a cow's hoof is cleaned, it takes time for healthy growth to return. Where are you currently seeing the "fruits of repentance" or new, healthy growth in your spiritual life?

## Close in Prayer

Close your time in prayer together.