

Luke 3: <sup>15</sup> The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ. <sup>16</sup> John replied to them all, “I baptize you with water, but the one who is more powerful than me is coming. I’m not worthy to loosen the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> The shovel he uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in his hands. He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into his barn. But he will burn the husks with a fire that can’t be put out.”

<sup>21</sup> When everyone was being baptized, Jesus also was baptized. While he was praying, heaven was opened <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit came down on him in bodily form like a dove. And there was a voice from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness.”

## The Plunge Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Nearly fifty years ago my oldest brother announced to my mom and dad, “Elysa and I want to take ‘the plunge.’” Dad thought Jim wanted to borrow his swim trunks. “No, we want to, you know, take the plunge, get married!” They wanted to jump into something that would change their lives forever. They understood the seriousness of the commitment, the life-changing effects that marriage mandates. They called it “the Plunge”. Harper and Row defines the plunge “to enter with sudden decision upon an unfamiliar course of action, as after hesitation or deliberation.”

Marriage can be considered a plunge. Who knows how it will turn out? Who knows what lies ahead? We make a commitment, and we plunge right in, and our lives are changed. Life continues to offer opportunities to take “the plunge”. Whole families take “the plunge” when teenagers earn their driver’s licenses. Moms and dads must let go and youth must make life altering decisions as they plunge into adult life. It’s not easy.

Each member stepping out in faith which requires patience, trust, risk and understanding.

The alcoholic, drug abuser will never get better, will never recover until they take the plunge by admitting they have a problem. That step moves them out, down the difficult road of recovery. Not until the commitment to seeking help will healthy change ever occur.

Take the plunge of knowing who you are. Not until we finally realize, not until we come to grips with who we really are, with all our good qualities and with all our not so good qualities, will we be freed to be who God created us to be.

Let's look at the plunge our Lord and Savior, Jesus, whom we call Christ, took as told to us by Luke. See who he is and consider who we are: <sup>21</sup> When everyone was being baptized, Jesus also was baptized. While he was praying, heaven was opened <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit came down on him in bodily form like a dove. And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."

Jesus was just one of the many being baptized by John that day.

Jesus submitted himself to being baptized, taking the physical and spiritual and religious plunge into the Jordan River. While in prayer, the Holy Spirit, in the bodily form of a dove, a symbol of peace plunged upon him and words from heaven rang out: "You are my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." God plunged to earth letting Jesus know he is loved, embraced, and delighted by God.

In baptism, the one being baptized is submitting into God's love. In baptism, God plunges intimately into our lives saying, "I am mother to you. I am father to you. You are my child." This relationship takes patience, trust, risk and understanding.

This is not a baptism. It is not a rebaptism- this is a renewal, and reminder that we are baptized.

Today, on this cold, wintry morning, we are going to take the plunge. We will renounce sin and evil. We will profess our belief in Jesus Christ as Lord. We will come forward and touch the water. Plunge your hand in or throw the water on your head, or just dip a finger and make the sign of the cross on your forehead all the while hearing the words, "You are a beloved child of God. You are God's delight."

Touch it. Feel it. Listen for it. Take it in.

Come and touch the water. Now if you have not been baptized in any Christian tradition, come forward and get a sense of the water- but this is not a baptism. Talk with me after worship if you want to be baptized and the session will be honored to meet with you. But come to the water.

Jewish tradition had a baptism ritual of cleansing. John came with a baptism of repentance. Jesus offers a baptism, a plunging into community. You are named, claimed, redeemed, forgiven. We hear these words every Sunday as we begin worship.

You belong! You are welcomed here! You are loved. That's not from me- that's from Jesus Christ. I want you to remember your baptism!

Now I was baptized July 29, 1956. I can't remember the act of baptism. I know I was there. Rev. Dr. Stuart Oglesby baptized me in Central Presbyterian Church in downtown Atlanta. There were no pictures or videos- so I can't recall the event. But I know I am baptized for my parents and my church family continued to remind me that I was loved and accepted. I was expected to act in a certain way because of God's love for me.

Remember you are baptized!

Our baptism changes our lives forever. God has committed to love and nurture us and to always be with us. In baptism, we are enveloped and anointed in God's shower of love. Our baptism plunges us into God's love for us.

Remember your baptism and give thanks.

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