As we read earlier, our *Call to Worship* this morning took us on a journey through the water that was there even before the creation. The earth was described being as *a formless void* overshadowed with *darkness. The only thing that was there was the wind from God (or the Spirit) and there was water….and plenty of it, both above and below.[[1]](#footnote-1)* Now let’s just pause here for a moment, because it says a lot. There was NOTHING but chaos on this earth. There was no light, because light has not been created yet. There was no land, no vegetation, no animal, and no human yet of course. The only things that were around were the Spirit of God and water. They seemed to be inseparable…As a matter of fact, it was the Spirit of God that was breathed into the human form and gave its life and most of the human body is consisted of water.

Water as we know, can give life as well as destruction and death. It is a powerful transformation agent. This same water that gave us life also eradicated life, as evident by the Great Flood. It **liberated us from the bondage and oppression of slavery out of Egypt** and provided a safe passage towards freedom. It quenched our thirst as it sprouted through the rock in the desert. It sheltered us in our mothers’ womb and cleansed the feet of our neighbors. It **baptized us and nurtured us into a new beginning and with a new hope**. As you see, water plays integral parts throughout the course of our human existence. Without water, life simply is not possible.

 But the water that I would like for us to focus on this morning is the **water that gives us new life** through our baptism and the **water that cleanses us** through the **washing of one another’s feet**, as Christ taught his disciples. Our baptism is a symbolically memorable event signifying the beginning of one’s life-long journey with God and certainly not the end. Even after we’ve been baptized, confessed our faith and dedicated our lives, we are still very much vulnerable to the temptations and the sins of this world, as we’ve seen immediately after Jesus’s baptism, he was led into the wilderness where He was being tested by Satan. We acknowledge our frailty as human and at times we stumble and fall short of God’s glory in our thoughts and in our actions. We come seeking God’s grace and forgiveness in God’s presence. That’s why we remember not only Christ’s baptism on this 1st Sunday of Epiphany but we also remember and recommit our own.

Some of us may have the privilege of experiencing our baptism as adults, while some experienced it as a child or as infant. Some get baptized at the fount, in a pool or even in the river or a lake. They are the same baptism that applies only once. The emphasis here isn’t on the manner or the method of how one gets baptized but the fact that we are cleansed by the saving grace of our Lord. We seek God’s intervention in our lives.

Just as we read in the passage earlier, Jesus came to the Jordan asking John to baptize him. This kind of took John by surprise because he knew that he was not worthy to baptize Jesus. While John may knew who Jesus was, but others may not. When John saw his cousin, Jesus, approaching the river, immediately he knew that the moment has arrived. It was time for John to step aside and become less, while Jesus must arise and become great. It was time for God’s glory to be manifested, just as we celebrate God’s Epiphany to us on this day. Jesus simply wanted to do what his Father wanted him to do by setting an example for others to emulate…the same way he later on washed the disciples’ feet and asking us to do likewise to others through grace, compassion, humility, and love.

As John proclaimed to those who came seeking their baptism, **“*I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will******baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.[[2]](#footnote-2)***

 Upon Jesus’s baptism, it was described that the heavens opened up and Spirit of God descended like a dove and a light was shined upon God’s beloved Son, signified the beginning of Jesus’s earthly ministry. There’s a certain Divine and mystified moment here, as a voice came down from heaven declaring, ***“This is my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*** What a powerfulway to make a public declaration affirming the true identity of who Christ was – as God’s Beloved Son.

This Epiphany moment, was one of the rare occurrences where all three persons of the Trinity were present – the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. For the first time, the true identity of Jesus was publicly revealed. Mary and Joseph had cherished this in their hearts for so long, but now, the whole world has been informed. “***This is my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*  This was Christ’s inauguration of his earthly ministry and through our baptism, we were there alongside as God’s witnesses.**

 When it comes to baptism, we often have this misconception that it marks the completion of our faith journey. We can check off another life’s spiritual milestone off the list, whereas it’s quite the opposite, it is just the beginning! Some churches do require the individuals who are getting baptized to undergo a two-year long catechism classes, when they would be examined at the end to see whether or not one is ready to be baptized.

**Furthermore, this community of faith (the Church) carries a critical responsibility of not only nurturing those who have already been baptized but leading others who have NOT been baptized, towards their commitment in Christ.**

 Through our common baptism in Christ, we have been **“bonded by our water of baptism”**. Just as we are all connected by the oceans of the earth and by the air that we breathe, **we are all drawn together by the living water of Christ and through the Spirit of Baptism. The Spirit of baptism draws us not only “out of the water” but it also sends us out “into the world” in order to carry out God’s mission here on earth.**

Our baptism commissions us to live, to bear witness of, and to serve as disciple of Christ. **This is our calling upon God’s mission for humanity. As we have been the beneficiary of God’s initiative of grace, we must now become the benefactors and witnesses of God’s calling in the lives of others. Our baptism is defined by the fruits that we bear in fulfilling God’s purpose here on earth.** As one theologian puts it so well that, ***“being baptized finds its purpose in what follows - a calling to God's way of doing things in a world that often resists, but is always changed by those who seek to walk God's path.”[[3]](#footnote-3)*** We bear the marks of our baptism throughout our lives and how we may transpire God’s love to others, just as one of our hymns suggests that “they will know that we are Christians by our love”.

 Friends, by the virtue of our common baptism with Christ, we are invited to embark on this same mission with Christ as our captain. At the proper time, we may be asked to take the lead while at times we may be asked to step aside and let others take command. When John spotted Jesus coming down to the river requesting to be baptized, John claimed that he was not worthy to be baptizing Jesus. John also knew that his time would soon come to a close, he must step aside and pass on the torch to Jesus in order for God’s mission to be glorified.

This was an important reminding moment for us as well on this day of Epiphany. Remember who we are, what mission do we ultimately seek to achieve, who do we ultimately belong to and follow? Are we willing to go the extra mile and to explore the ways which the Spirit may lead us, even after we have personally experienced Christ? Imagine what might have happened if the Wise Men had gone back to where they came from and be settled after seeing the Christ-child, without sharing the news with others? God’s plan is certainly greater than our plan, as we seek to faithfully take our journey into wherever God may send us. The Spirit will not disappoint us.

 The season of Advent and Christmas may have drawn to a close, as we transition into this precarious season known as Epiphany between Christmas and Lent. With all the decorations stalled away for another year, some of us may wonder what is next? What may God have in store for us next? The shepherds and the Magi have all now returned to where they came from…but taken a different path. They returned, having seen the Messiah child, with a renewed sense of mission and purpose in proclaiming and revealing God’s dream and hope for us in this world. **This is what the season of Epiphany all about. It is a season of pursuing God’s dream that has been placed upon our hearts. It is about unveiling God’s endless possibilities and also surprises through our faith in Jesus Christ.** We trust that God will continue to direct and show us the path of Christ that we should take in leading others to see this light of Christ as declared to us, *“this is my child, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”*

**This is the greatest hope and joy that we can bring to others today. Remember Christ’s baptism, just as we remember our own! Let us invite others to come to the well and be quenched of their spiritual thirst.** Thanks be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Genesis 1:2* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Matthew 3:11* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Singh, Jennifer Peterson <http://www.d365.org/todaysdevotion/> 1/8/14 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)