

Summerland United Church
Jan 11, 2026
Your Belovedness

Threshold and Christ Candle

Today we honour a special baptism; the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth, in the river Jordan, by his cousin, John the Baptist. And we hear the voice of the Holy say: Look! See my child, the One in whom I utterly delight; I have placed my Spirit on him, he will bring true justice to the nations.

When Jesus was baptised, the heavens opened up, and Spirit came down like a dove; and there was a voice from heaven saying: "This is my dearly loved Child, my beloved."

What would our relationships be like without the human fear of rejection? What amazing things could happen if we lived into our best, most passionate, loving self? If we can but believe that we too are God's beloved, think of abundance of grace and acceptance we can find for ourselves and each other.

Opening Prayer

Most wonderful God, today we pray to you with words by Macrina Wiederkehr
Guide us in these beliefs and know them to be true, as we are your beloved and you tell us to believe the truth about ourselves, no matter how beautiful it is.

I will believe the truth about myself
No matter how beautiful it is:

I believe in my power
To transform indifference into love.

I believe I have an amazing gift
To keep hope alive in the face of despair.

I believe I have the remarkable skill
Of deleting bitterness from my life.

I believe in my budding potential
To live with a nonviolent heart
I believe in my passion to speak the truth
Even when it isn't popular.

I believe I have the strength of will
To be peace in a world of violence.

I believe in my miraculous capacity for unconditional love.

I will believe the truth about myself
No matter how beautiful it is.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 42:1 and Matthew 3:13-17

Whether you take what is written in the bible as fact, myth, metaphor or story,
listen for the meaning it has for you on this day.

Isaiah 42:1

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations."

Matthew 3: 13-17

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God's Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from the heavens said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Reader: May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection

This is my child, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased. What beautiful words – if only we could believe them about ourselves. At contemplative prayer this week we read the Isaiah passage as our Lectio Divina – our sacred listening. One person as intrigued by the phrase – *'in whom my soul delights'* they wondered who was speaking, and if it was God speaking through the prophet Isaiah, then did that mean God has a soul?

In our little bit of conversation about this we discussed the belief that we all carry a spark of the divine within us, we might call it spirit or soul or something else. In Centering pray we center our thoughts on this inward place at the center of our being – and the place where God dwells with in us.

Christian Mystics, like Julian of Norwich, Hildegard of Bingen, Meister Eckart and Gertude of Helfta all speak about this center place in their writings. They name it different things: One-ing, Viriditas, the Sacred Heart.

I refer to it as the light within us all. It's the place that aches when we experience awe, wonder, beauty, pain, suffering – we know it as heartache – both good and bad.

Why am I talking about this? Because when we hear these words spoken over Jesus at his baptism, spoken by Isaiah centuries beforehand – we are not supposed to hear them applied just to Jesus. We are supposed to hear them applied to us.

To us. *“Here you are my child, my beloved, with you I am well pleased.”* They’re our words. If only we could believe it about ourselves.

In my Jewish Torah class we’ve begun the book of Exodus, the story of Moses. What stood out for me this week as we read the birth narrative of Moses – was names. Names are important. And by learning with Jewish scholars I get a inside scoop on theology that we Christians miss. The name Moses, isn’t Jewish, it’s Egyptian. And it means “A Man” or “A Man of”. Usually this name would a company the name of a God, making the name – a man of this God. *Ramses* mean Man of Ra.

Moses, doesn’t have that he’s just a man. And so the implication there is Moses could be any man, any person willing to stand up and do what’s right in the world. Someone, anyone who want’s to leave the world a little bit better than they found it.

And what does Jesus mean? Yeshua or Yehoshua in Hebrew means – God saves. And we know Jesus has another name in Matthew – Emmanuel – which means *God is with us*. And Matthew wanted his original readers, primarily Jewish people, to believe Jesus was the new Moses. Its why we have stories of the flight to Egypt, the killing of the innocence – so we remember Moses, Passover and the flight from Egypt.

So, still following. If Jesus is the new Moses and Moses was just an ordinary person in extraordinary circumstances – which any person could have found themselves in, then the implication is the same for Jesus. Any person, anyone could have been chosen by God.

In Moses birth story, none of the other characters have names, they’re nobodies. In the birth narratives of Jesus, all the characters are nobodies as well. Mary and Joseph are poor, the Magi are foreign. The Shepherds in Luke are only slightly better than slaves.

None of these people are anything special in and of themselves – but their actions, the things they do are. They all follow the willing God, which in both stories is so unpopular they risk death or torture.

Yet God sees each and everyone of them as beloved. God is well pleased by them – imperfections and lousy resumes and all.

And this means – anyone of us and everyone of us are beloved as well. It does not serve God or the world to cut yourself short by not believing this truth. To let that voice of doubt that says your not good enough. It is not arrogance of vanity to say I am beloved. I am beloved. No if, ands or buts – I am beloved.

Can you own it? Feel it nestle into that center place within your soul? I am beloved. I will believe the truth about myself, no matter how beautiful. May it be so.