

Baptism: Jesus' baptism: your baptism:

Jasmine Anderson-Sprague
Gethsemane Lutheran Church

“New Year, New You”

What goals do we hear or make most often when that January 1st date rolls around every year? Have we ever sat and asked ourselves why we choose January 1st to decide we're going to stop indulging in sugary snacks or splurging on material items we don't 'need' so much as 'want'? Those words are very different; need and want.

Our church calendar begins in December with Advent; why don't we decide with Advent and the space we are making for the coming of Christ, the waiting we are doing, the building anticipation, that throwing out bad habits then is a better time?

We often hear the story of John the Baptizer in Mark 1:4-11.

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

We read this passage quickly because it is familiar; we have heard it often, we know the story, and mostly we take away that Jesus was baptized! Yay! We don't pay attention to John's clothing choice (which is weird, unless we remember that Elijah wore almost the same exact clothes in the Old Testament. But more on that in another lesson...). We don't pay attention to the fact that John is eating locusts and honey which seems like an odd thing to eat. God uses locusts and honey often in the Old Testament, but that is also a whole different lesson.

We often only focus on Jesus' baptism when we read this passage. What about our own baptism? Did the heavens open up and allow a dove to descend? Probably not. Two things are needed for a baptism though; God's word and water. That's it! Often baptisms are performed by a pastor, but they don't have to be. John baptized hundreds (maybe thousands) of people with a 'baptism of repentance' – a baptism with water – effectively making them new. “New Baptism – Who Dis?” you might say.

Every day is a new day to remember our own baptisms; in the shower, washing our hands, getting caught in the rain. We are all God's children, His beloveds. We don't need a date on a calendar to tell us

to “be new”, we simply need to remember our newness in baptism and the promises that come with that gift.