

Sermon, January 12, 2025

Pastor Chelsea Globe

[Isaiah 43:1-7; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22]

Good morning, everyone! As Pastor Dan said, I am Pastor Chelsea Globe, and I serve as pastor for Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Washington. I was here last summer, and so I know some of you, and I'm so happy to be here again with you today. Thank you for having me and for inviting me, Dan, and members of the Adult Forum Committee. Thank you for having me here.

It has been a great year for Campus Ministry at UW. I started in November 2020, so, during our "pandemic times," as we not-so-fondly remember them, right? And each year – we had no ministry that was happening then. So, each year, it's grown, little by little. I started recruiting, you know, a couple little students that we'd meet on Zoom, or walk around the campus for coffee and every year since then, it's been little-by-little more. So, then it was, you know, two students. And when we started meeting in person at University Lutheran, finally, it was every Wednesday night. We do Wednesday night dinners. If anybody wants to come, bring a dinner, you can do that. Talk to Carol Anne. She's very good at it! Has done it for over 20 years. So come talk to me, too. You know, we'd have four to six, maybe that first year, then the next year, we had six to eight, or then eight to 10. And this year we've got, I've got 12 to 15 coming consistently. So it's working, it's moving. It's great, really fun. I've got a big group of freshmen this year, so it's a whole different, very young energy happening, and it's just been a great time with these students, and a really wonderful ministry happening, and a little community, a little home for them in this University that can be so big and so overwhelming. And I just love creating this little place where they can come and have friends and be known and be fed with real food. They just love that. They love times when we get together with the congregation, and they love talking with the people who bring dinners for them, and knowing that there's people outside of their parents or professors, but adults who care about them enough to bring a dinner.

So it's a great time of great exciting things happening in this ministry, and you can be involved in lots of ways. Keep us in your prayers. We would love that. If you'd like to bring a dinner, come see me. We are a self-sustaining ministry of the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA, so if you can donate financially, we'd love that. I've got a little table out there with some information and swag and a newsletter. Sign up! We're doing a new, actual mailed-to-you, newsletter, with just stories of students, and people who are involved. You'll see Carol Ann's story next month when we send that

out, too. So, come talk to me after service about all the things we're doing in Campus Ministry. Okay? The marketing portion of sermon is over, okay!

Today: Baptism of Our Lord Sunday. This is one of these rare stories that we have in all four Gospels. There actually aren't that many – kind of funny when you think of it – but this is one of them.

I think we like to tell the story of Jesus's baptism every year to remember that, like many of us, probably most of us in this room, Jesus was also baptized. His baptism story was maybe perhaps a little bit more dramatic than a lot of ours – a whole, you know, heavens-opening and dove-coming-down and words-of-God-speaking – but it is something that we all share with the Son of God: baptism.

I'd like all of us to take a moment and think about our own baptisms, if you're baptized; if you *haven't* been baptized, think of maybe a baptism you've seen, or a story that you've heard about a baptism – and then I want you to turn to someone next to you and share that story. (I know, we love talking during sermons, right? But you're going to do it, yeah!) If you are sitting by yourself, go find someone to share it with, especially if you're a more mobile person, go find someone who's maybe not as mobile. Okay, so you're going to find someone to share your baptismal story with, or a story of a baptism you've seen or heard of, ...and Go! ...

Are there a couple of brave souls who would be willing to share their baptismal story with the whole group? Who will share their story?

...

A lot of us in Lutheran or some other mainline traditions have the baby story, right? They brought us to the font and splashed the head, and maybe we had a special thing we wore.

Any other stories, anyone have a story they think is just like, really cool, or really special?... Anyone have one they think it's just super boring? I saw that hand!...

...

Yeah, we all have these different stories. If we've been in the church a while, and either us, or our parents, decided to do that rite, of how that came about, and sometimes we remember it, and sometimes it was before we remember. And some of us came from other traditions where it was done differently, and however it's done, that's great; that's awesome, that's how it happened. God works through all of those different ways! I love that about our Lutheran tradition. We don't say there's a right or a wrong way. Right? Baptism is *God's* thing, and however it happens, is good.

But we don't often think about our own baptism. I think we talk a lot about baptism in church, especially on days when we do a "Thanksgiving for Baptism" at the beginning of your service; sometimes, instead of a Kyrie, or sometimes that's part of the liturgy. You can put in at the beginning of a service. You can start with a Thanksgiving for Baptism, or Remembrance of Baptism, or maybe on a special Sunday. If you have a baptism, that's part of the liturgy, right? And it's kind of a thanksgiving for the overall gift of baptism.

But we don't often think about our *own*, our very own baptism, in that moment. So, the next time you do that "Thanksgiving for Baptism" in service, or even the next time you walk by the font back there, maybe just dip your finger in and think, "This isn't just about the gift of baptism in general, which it is, but *my* baptism too." My baptism.

And remember, we were talking about baptism as a call, as God calling you, God choosing *you*, your flaws and frailty, your brokenness and beauty, to be part of this family.

You know that voice that speaks at Jesus baptism, that says, "You," to Jesus, "you are my Son, the Beloved. With you I am well pleased."

Well, God said that same thing over *you*, the day that water rained over your head, or whole body, or however it happened. And God continues to say that, day after day after day, even on our worst days and in our worst moments, even when we have not been our best selves or made the best choices, or acted as we should.

As Martin Luther wrote in the Small Catechism, "In baptism, daily, our sins and evil inclinations are drowned and die. And daily, a new person rises up to **live** before God in righteousness." In other words, not, you know, 16th-century words: We are saint and sinner, all day, every day, all together, we do our best and we try again, and each day is another chance to love and care for our neighbors and ourselves as best we can and still, no matter what God keeps saying, You, you, I mean, *you* Carol Ann, *you* Magdalena, *you* Isabel. *You are my beloved*. Now insert your own name here, okay – because I don't know all your names – "you are my beloved, and with you, I am well pleased."

Now this is one of the things about Luke's version of this story that's a bit unique. Yeah, we have it in all four Gospels, but they're all a little bit different. In Luke's version, you'll see here, if you notice on the back of the bulletin, there's some parts that are left out of the reading here, it skips to verse 21 and it says, "Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus had been baptized..."

There's no special moment where it says, "and John the Baptist baptized Jesus." All the other Gospels have that this very particular moment when John baptizes Jesus. In Luke, it's not really all about Jesus, it's the *people!*

Actually, John, in Luke's version, he might not have been there! That part that we skipped, Herod was throwing John in jail – so either he got it out of order, or John might have not even been there at the baptism of Jesus, and maybe the people just went, "Um, John's not here anymore. What do we do? Do the baptisms stop? No, let's just keep it going," and they just keep going with this big old baptism party, right?

"When all the people had been baptized and when Jesus had been baptized..."

And this is a main emphasis of Luke's Gospel. Jesus's place as the Son of God is *among us*, is among humanity. That's why it's *Luke's Gospel* that includes the story of the manger and the shepherds, regular people, and before that, that's why it has the long story of Mary and Elizabeth, and Mary sings the *Magnificat*. It's *regular people* who are involved in the story of the Son of God. It's a very down-to-earth, nitty gritty, embodied Gospel, for a very down-to-earth, nitty gritty, embodied God.

This is the God who calls us to the waters, who knows us by name, who knows what it is like to be here and to be with us.

The call to baptism, and the call of our baptism, is the most fundamental call upon our lives. The Isaiah text promises that God has called us and knows us each by name, and this is where we hear the echo of that call and that name, "beloved," in the water. It is a call that is both reassuring and comforting, but it also should be invigorating and encouraging. We are beloved. We are called not to just sit back and relax or lord it over others – like, all right, we're chosen, great – but to go out and love and serve our neighbors.

We get to let go of our worry over our standing in God's eyes, we get to trust that we are beloved, and go out and take care of our neighbors. We get to stand up for the oppressed and the forgotten, the marginalized and the abused. We get to use our faith and our church as a platform for speaking truth to power, to say "no" to tyranny and abuse of power and imperialism.

What joy there is then in our baptism, our individual baptism, the stories of our baptisms, however we got there: what freedom in this gift. That's what Jesus and so many of his community experienced as well, and so many of his followers have through the ages, and then we remember it as so, in every drop of water that we encounter, whether that is here at the font, when we pass by, whether that's when we go outside and feel a sprinkle; every time we encounter water, may we remember that call.

And may we remember that is also the Spirit moving within us, the Spirit's call on our hearts as well, which I think we might be needing to feel in these months and years ahead.

Thanks be to God. Amen.