

# **Sermon for Sunday, January 11, 2009**

## **First Sunday After Epiphany**

**By Tim Ljunggren**

**First Lesson**      **Genesis 1:1-5**  
**Psalm**              **Psalm 29**  
**Second Lesson**   **Acts 19:1-7**  
**Gospel**              **Mark 1:4-11**

*“And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’”*

When was the last time you heard a voice from heaven? How do you hear God’s voice?

When was the last time that God was well pleased with you? What does it take to please God?

In today’s gospel lesson from Saint Mark, we hear the story of Jesus’ baptism in the River Jordan by his cousin, that wild man from the wilderness, John the Baptist. In that act of total and absolute obedience to God, Jesus does what’s expected of him, and allows himself to be immersed into his earthly ministry.

It seems a bit odd, doesn’t it? I mean, just a little over two weeks ago—has it been two weeks already?—we were celebrating the birth of Jesus; now, here he is all grown up, taking up the mantle that God has given to him without hesitation.

*“And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’”*

Maybe Jesus had an unfair advantage over the rest of us—being the Son, the Beloved, maybe it was easier for him to determine exactly what it was that pleases God the most. Maybe Jesus had an automatic response built in to him that prevented any doubt from entering into his mind about what he was supposed to be doing and when.

Maybe—but that’s not the way it was.

Being fully clothed in human flesh, Jesus also wore our human frailty as well. He was subject to all of the doubt, all of the speculation, and all of the pain associated with being fully human. When he allowed himself to be baptized by John in the River Jordan, Jesus was not only preparing for his earthly ministry, but he was also preparing for his death as well.

Just like every one of us gathered here this morning.

By the very nature of our own baptisms, we join Jesus in that River Jordan, fully aware of what God expects from us and fully aware of what is to become of our mortal flesh.

Unfortunately, sometimes we think that we can avoid both our ministries and our deaths by simply choosing not to acknowledge them.

*“And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’”*

Once again, I ask you...

When was the last time you heard a voice from heaven? How do you hear God's voice?

When was the last time that God was well pleased with you? What does it take to please God?

God expects us to figure out how we're gifted, and then God expects us to figure out how to use those very gifts to the glory of the Divine. That's our job as a Christian community—as a community of faith.

Just like Jesus, we're all given something new and fresh to do. Just like Jesus, we've been doused in the life-giving waters of the River Jordan. Just like Jesus, our human frailty is counterbalanced by our God-given likeness in the image of God—the Holy One reigns supreme in our hearts, but only if we can wrap our minds around the fact that the only thing of importance in this—and the next—life is God.

But only if we can wrap our minds around that fact...which is so difficult to do at times, isn't it?

God is not asking us to be perfect; God knows, even if we wanted to, we couldn't. Our human limitations keep getting in the way. Yet, God has deemed us necessary by the very acts of our birth and our baptism, and God expects us to live into our own Baptismal Covenant, just as Jesus lived into his.

When was the last time you heard a voice from heaven? How do you hear God's voice?

*"And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'"*

And a voice came from heaven, saying "\_\_\_\_\_, you are my Son/Daughter, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Fill in the blank.

Tim.

Cheryl.

Laverne.

Owen.

Jim.

Anne.

Ann.

The list just goes on and on and on, doesn't it?

We must find a way to hear our God speaking to us. We must find a way to praise God, not only with our lips, but with our lives. We must find a way to put our selfish behavior behind us, and to look forward to those baptismal waters that still swirl and dance in front of our eyes.

*“And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’”*

When was the last time you heard a voice from heaven? How do you hear God’s voice?

When was the last time that God was well pleased with you? What does it take to please God?

You already know the answers—the trick is living into those answers.

Amen. ...

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