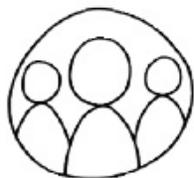


An Illustrated Earth - Celebrating God's Creation

Story Three - The Baptism of Jesus



GATHERING

Blessing with Water

In our sanctuary we see the baptismal font. Wonder out loud about why we consider the water used for baptism to be sacred water. Have a small bowl nearby and a pitcher of water. Pour the water into the bowl and bless it, saying, "We thank you, God, for the gift of water, and for all the ways it is important to us. Bless this water to remind us of our Holy Baptism and how we share in the life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen."



You may each dip a finger in the water and make the sign of the cross on each others' foreheads. Say, "God delights in calling you daughter/son."

Discussing Symbols (alternative activity)

Talk about how we use various symbols in everyday life to represent detailed ideas in a shortened form. Here are some examples:



Discuss how various symbols are a way of signifying a commitment. See if the children can come up with other symbols - things that we have given meaning to, above and beyond what they actually are.

Baptism is a symbol of our commitment to the ways of Christ.

These symbols are somewhat similar to the symbol of baptism, which is an acknowledgment of one's commitment, or the parents' commitment on the behalf of a child, to living in the ways of God and to be a part of the Church.

Even Jesus was baptized as a commitment to what God wanted him to do with his life and we can find this story in the Bible.



STORY TIME

Matthew 3:13-17

*(You may want to start with Part 1 **and include** Part 2. OR either can be done alone.)*

Part 1

Here is a paraphrase of this story that is easy for children to read and understand. You may want to read it several times. The first time read the whole story, then read it again and stop after each thought to talk about it.

Jesus left Galilee and went to the Jordan River so John would baptize him.
John didn't understand, saying, "Why do you want me to baptize you, Jesus? You should be baptizing me!"
But Jesus said, "Allow this to happen. This is right and needed."
When John baptized Jesus, the sky opened. Jesus saw God's Spirit come down like a dove that rested on him. Then a voice from the sky said, "This is my Son whom I love so much. He makes me so happy."

Part 2

Here is that same paraphrase broken up into a script.
You may want to share the reading between two (or more) people in your group.
Have the readers stand up to do their parts.
Have them read it once all the way through, then have them stop after each thought to discuss it. Talk about what comes first, what comes next, and then, . . .
Have them add motions to the different parts.

Script: Matthew 3:13-17

**Reader 1: Jesus left Galilee and went to the Jordan River
so John would baptize him.**

Reader 2: John didn't understand, saying, "Why do you want me to baptize you, Jesus? You should be baptizing me!"

Reader 1: But Jesus said, "Allow this to happen. This is right and needed."

Reader 2: When John baptized Jesus, the sky opened. Jesus saw God's Spirit
come down like a dove that rested on him.
Then a voice from the sky said,

Reader 1: "This is my Son whom I love so much. He makes me so happy."

Now let everyone tell the story by heart (not reading it), with motions or with the story cards. What comes first, then what, then what, . . .



IMAGINING TOGETHER

You can do this along with **Coloring**.

After you've spent some time with the story, ask each person about the story and see what stood out to them.

What did they imagine when they listened to the story and learned it?

Here are a few questions that you could reflect on together. You can add your own:

- What are some things that seem ordinary but are actually really special?
- Are there things we think are ordinary that God uses in the world to do amazing things?
- What is it like to go under water? Maybe at the swimming pool? Or under the waves at the beach? What does it feel like to be under water and to come up for air?
- Talk about how scripture describes the scene. What would it have been like to be there?
- Why might John the Baptist have hesitated to baptize Jesus?
- How many of us have been baptized? What was it like?



COLORING

We have included coloring sheets here.

The first four include a scene from the Exodus story.

The other two are posters with a word, phrase or portion of the biblical passage incorporated into the design.

Coloring is an opportunity to continue talking about the story, while asking questions and seeing where the conversation takes you. Because many of the story's elements are integrated into the coloring design, it may be fun to search out as many symbols as you can that communicate an aspect of the story.



CLOSING PRAYER

After the coloring is done and the conversation is complete, gather everyone together again for the Closing Prayer.

Whether one person reads the prayer, or they have everyone repeat, phrase by phrase - use this as a chance to "close" your time together. This is a great short ritual to do together; it creates a sense of community and preparation as they enter back into the world.

Loving God,
Thank you for baptism water
and how it frees us to live
with joy and hope as your children.
Help us remember we
are enough in your eyes.
Amen.

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