

A Sermon for Robbinsdale United Church of Christ
January 13, 2008
Rev. T. Michael Rock

Scripture Readings – Acts 10:34-43 and Matthew 3:13-17

Sermon Title: “The Water Breaks”

(open with prayer)

Introduction:

This season of Epiphany is often looked over. It may even be called the “black sheep” of the liturgical calendar. We do big things during Advent, Lent, and Easter, but this season of meaning often gets brushed aside. I was reminded this week, however, of the deep significance about this time. The time between Christmas and Lent marks the very short experience of Jesus’ ministry here on earth. This season looks at events from his life. It is the role of the worship leaders to help make Jesus come to life and walk among us, so I think it just makes sense that I have some help from all you worship leaders.

“What do we know about Jesus?”

“Who is this guy?”

(answers from the congregations.)

Let’s look now where Peter started with this same question. Peter proclaims right out there that God shows no partiality. All are welcome. It started with the baptism. That’s when the message started to spread. That’s when people started listening to the prophet. Jesus has come for us all. His baptism in the waters of the Jordan was the great act of inclusion. Everyone had come down to the river to bathe, wash clothes, and be baptized. It was the great equalizer moment. Jews came to the water, Greeks came to the water. The sick and the well came to the water, women and men came to the water. The rich and the poor came to the water. It was in the water, when John baptized Jesus that the heavens opened up and the ministry of Jesus began. Baptism is supposed to mean something to us. Baptism is the act of welcome, inclusion, and for some, the radical change from living for their own welfare or living for others.

“Do you remember your baptism?”

Whether you do or do not, “What does your baptism mean?”

(answers from the congregation)

Our own United Church of Christ Book of Worship describes the meaning of baptism in this way, "A person is incorporated into the universal church, the body of Christ, through the sacrament of baptism. The water, words, and actions of the sacrament are visible signs that convey the Christian's burial and resurrection with Christ. The invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the water and upon the candidate for baptism is an affirmation that it is God who takes the initiative in the sacrament. 'Baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift.' It is, 'a sign and seal of our common discipleship. Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the church in every time and place.'" The amazing thing about this definition is that it can never be broken. In baptism, we are united with Christ by his baptism. The hope and wish of the church, "that they may all be one," is realized in baptism.

Your task on this Sunday is to remember your own baptism and connection. The water is ready. God offers the invitation to remember your baptism. There is a bowl in the narthex waiting for you, and I have to point out, that bowl of water and the blessing that waits for you is not a big "C" Catholic thing. It has nothing to do with Rome. Rather, it is a small "c" catholic thing. It is a universal blessing for all people at all times and in all places. If you are not yet baptized, see me after church and we'll talk about a date to make that happen. Still touch the water and receive the oneness in Christ, but the invitation is there to add ritual to meaning.

These days, all I think it about is water, both the water of faith and the water that holds my baby girl. When the water breaks, I know that I will receive a blessing beyond measure her birth. I know God's presence will connect us together and she will receive that blessing through this miracle. When the water breaks, we will always be connected, and she and her mom will be connected in a new way. When the water breaks, you also will receive your blessing and your reminder of God's universal blessing for all on whom the water breaks.

One last story that we need today, a Lutheran pastor was visiting Calcutta and asked mother Theresa what the biggest problem in the world was. He expected to hear, poverty, disease, war, or something along those lines. Instead, she said, "Our families are too small." The biggest problem in the world according this prophet was not something we don't have control over, but something that we do. Our family is too small. The biggest problem we have is not somebody else's responsibility, it is ours. We don't always get that this blessing and God's presence is for all people. We are all related by our baptism. It is no surprise that it took a Baptist minister to remind us that we all live in a World House, but we'll tell that story next week.

AMEN.

