

Baptism of Christ Sunday - January 11, 2026

- Isaiah 42:1-9 - Psalm 29 - Acts 10:34-43 - Matthew 3:13-17

“We belong to God. We belong to each other”

1. The Silver bracket championship game had just finished first overtime still tied. The 6<sup>th</sup> grader girls of Clifty Creek and Rockcreek were going into sudden death. First basket wins.
  - a. Supporters from the two teams had been cheering loudly in the full stands, and now supporters for the next championship game were also packing into the gym, patiently waiting for their teams to start their game.
  - b. The tip off at center court was won by the taller Rockcreek player, sending the ball towards her teammate, but a savvy Clifty Creek guard anticipated the ball trajectory, stole the ball, and dribbled to the basket for a layup.
  - c. Missed. Got her own rebound.
  - d. Made. Game over.
  - e. The crowd went wild. Winning players jumped up and down.
  - f. Somewhere in the stands, a parent in the crowd beamed a wider smile than all of us, thinking, perhaps telling anyone who would listen: that’s my girl. Hey, that’s my kid.
2. You’re not going to find a translation of today’s passage with God saying from the clouds: That’s my kid! But maybe there should be one.
  - a. There is pride in God’s voice. There is love.
  - b. There is even a sense of looking ahead, because Jesus was beginning his public ministry, after all.
  - c. John reluctantly baptized Jesus, because Jesus outranked him, but Jesus insisted.
  - d. It’s all a little confusing, really.
  - e. That baptism was meant as a ceremonial act to declare one’s sins and feel the water washing them all away, so was Jesus declaring sins too?
  - f. He told John it was for another purpose, a way maybe to come full circle on the scriptures. And so it was.
  - g. Jesus had a task ahead, to bring people back to God, a story with echoes throughout the scriptures, over and over again, with God’s mercy overflowing and trying to claim us.
  - h. That’s my kid, God said at the baptism, and also probably
    - i. at his countless miracles,
    - ii. and his shocking sermons,

- iii. and rattling arguments with the authorities,
  - iv. and, softer, painfully, at Gethsemani before he was arrested,
  - v. at the cross unjustly condemned to death,
  - vi. and then loudly at whoever would listen when witnessing an empty tomb.
  - vii. But I'm getting ahead of myself.
3. It's not lost on me that the Rockcreek players weren't jumping up and down when the final buzzer sounded.
- a. I had been cheering for the winning Clifty Creek, but on the other side of the aisle, the Rockcreek supporters filling those stands were quiet, sad.
  - b. But you know, I bet those parents were also thinking, hugging their disappointed daughters, hey, this is my kid.
  - c. She's brave and tenacious and I love her. This is my kid.
4. There is a reason we remember our baptism on most Sundays, and certainly today.
- a. We may do it in the beginning of worship, to celebrate that full circle of love on the scriptures, for the waters remind us of the waters of creation, of the Jordan where Jesus was baptized, of the waters our own baptism.
  - b. Or we may remember it during the prayer of confession, appreciating God's forgiveness embedded in the meaning of that water.
  - c. And today, in another full circle, we remember it also as we ordain and install our elders and deacons, who will help lead us for the next three years.
  - d. It's a full circle because when they were baptized, we as a Church (and here I don't mean just a congregation but the collective US, the family of God) declared that each of them is a child of God, beloved and gifted.
  - e. Don't miss that headline: God claims us, but we claim one another too.
  - f. We not only belong to God, but we belong to one another.
  - g. And like those 6<sup>th</sup> grader girls and their parents taught me, that is true no matter what the scoreboard says.
    - i. We belong to each other when we're serving or being cared for.
    - ii. When we're making us proud or disappointing us.
    - iii. When we're rolling right along or when we're struggling to make ends meet.
    - iv. When we know each other by name or when we've just met.
5. God says of each of us: that's my kid. We say of each other: that's my family.

## Reflection questions

1. Share a story remembering your own baptism or a baptism you were a part of for a loved one.
2. What strikes you about Jesus' baptism story in Matthew 3:13-17? What do you think was going through their mind: Jesus, John, the crowd?
3. What does it mean for our lives, in practical terms, if God is always saying of ALL of us "That's my kid!" when what the world really wants to do is to divide people into winners and losers, those who deserve or don't deserve God's love?