

Baptism of Our Lord Sunday (Year B); January 8, 2012
Advent Lutheran Church, Morgan Hill, CA
Rev. Anita R. Warner
Texts: Genesis 1:1-5, Mark 1:7-11

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

- Genesis 1:1-5

(John the Baptized, baptizing in the wilderness), proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

- Mark 1:7-11

Rock Star Jesus

It was my second year in college when I heard that a Huey Lewis and the News concert was coming to Marquette, Michigan.

This was amazing. One of the top bands at that moment, coming to the upper peninsula for a concert. This just didn't happen much. A group of us drove the 100 miles along Lake Superior from Houghton to Marquette in January, to go.

When the concert was about to begin, the place became dark. You could feel the anticipation. A drum starts a heartbeat, people cheer, bass guitar, electric guitar, keyboard and horns join in, then a single spotlight shines on Huey as he and the band begin "The Heart of Rock and Roll."

The arena erupts with excitement. Everyone is on their feet, dancing.

The people of Israel told and re-told the creation story with that same sense of excitement.

In the beginning, it was dark. And the Spirit of God was on the move.

God said: Let there be light – then - Wow! there was Light!!

God saw that the light was good, and said, *“This is good.”*

Disorder gives way to order. And not a static order, but a dynamic, Spirit-moving ordering of all things.

Fast forward many millennia, to the year 30, in the days of the Roman Empire. Mark tells the good news and begins it not with a birth story but with a creation story – Jesus standing in the water of the Jordan.

In that moment of this human receiving baptism, fully immersing himself in God’s calling and purposes for his life (because that’s what we do in baptism), the Creation itself comes to attention. The sky opens, a dove settles on him, and God says, *“This is good.”*

God says, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

You see, humanity was the second to last act of God’s creation (Sabbath being the last). Humanity had had the whole range of shining moments and horrifying moments and everything in between. Sometimes humanity lives harmoniously with creation, and other times feels beaten down by it.

In Jesus we see a Re-Creation of humanity. Here is God’s intention, a person fully dedicated to God’s life in the world, to God’s purposes.

He’s the Rock. Rocks are everywhere, from the windswept deserts are rock formations to the rocks just beneath water, worn smooth by the water flowing over them.

The people of Israel were a part of humanity intimately involved with God. They had a covenant relationship. Exodus 17 tells about when they were in the wilderness after God led them out of slavery in Egypt, but there in the wilderness they were finding the world around them to be difficult. They needed water and couldn’t find any. They complained to their leader, Moses, who wondered how in the world anyone could lead a group like this and

talked to God about it. God sent him to a rock and told him to strike that rock with his staff. He did, and water flowed out for all the people and their livestock.

And that's the end of it. Except the Apostle Paul, reflecting on this in his letter to the Corinthians (I Corinthians chapter 10) says, "And that rock was Christ."

Huh? The rock was Christ? There was no mention of Christ in the story. It took place long before Jesus lived.

Paul is saying that the Rock that sustained them, the working out God's intentions and purposes of leading and giving life to the people - - THAT is Christ. And Christ has been present from before the beginning of creation, present throughout history, is present now, and will be in whatever the future brings and holds. Rocks are everywhere, whether at that moment they are called Christ, or not, rocks that sustain people or re-direct them into God's purposes for this world.

In the year 20, the Christ who had been there all along was made visible in Jesus. No wonder Creation stood at attention at that moment Jesus was shown to be the Christ in human form at his baptism.

See Jesus' beauty and glory. He's the star, the bright morning star.

Pay attention to him.

Look in the world and in your life and ask, "Where is Christ?" so that you can pay attention to him.

Sometimes we cannot see Christ or we need another to point him out to us, as John the Baptizer pointed the way to Jesus.

Jesus shows us God's full intention for humanity. And we are to pay attention to him and let him be our teacher. Fully identifying with Jesus may be easier for some men to identify with than women, but Jesus has lots of women disciples, too.

Jesus is the rock.

Jesus is the stars.

Jesus is the rock star! Jesus shows us how to be fully human.

Jesus invites us to be renewed in our baptism today, opening ourselves up to God's will and God's work in us.

Just like people always have along their journey of faith, we may have questions. Questions about God's will and work in us. Questions about life. Questions about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Write down your questions on the index card you have in your worship folder. Offer them in the offering plate. I will try to address as many as I can in the sermons in the upcoming weeks.