

Luke 3:15-22

**“It Will Be Revealed”**

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*The Reading: Luke 3:15-22*

*<sup>15</sup> As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, <sup>16</sup> John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”*

*<sup>18</sup> So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. <sup>19</sup> But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, <sup>20</sup> added to them all by shutting up John in prison.*

*<sup>21</sup> Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”*

**The people didn’t know how God was going to act in their time, but they certainly needed help and divine salvation!** There were forces beyond their control – political, economic, religious, rampant health issues – wrecking havoc with their everyday lives. Sound familiar? In other words, they were contending with systemic, pervasive sin.

Plus, they felt oppressed by the temptation to do evil. Like us, they contended with *personal sin*: from their willful rebellion against God’s ways to simply getting annoyed with each other. Human frailties such as greed, distrust, violence, and fear plagued them.

What they *did* know is that over and over, across their history, **God had promised to act** – to send and anoint a leader. They just didn’t know *who* the Messiah would be, or *how* this salvation would come about or unfold. So as verse 15 expresses it: “The people were filled with expectation.” They were watching for supernatural signs and asking questions.

I remember how an unknown man standing near Dr. Martin Luther King, during his national speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial, asked the question: “How long?” to which King replied: “Not long!”

**So all of these folks at the Jordan were on the lookout!** “Could it be wild John? Might *he* be the Messiah? He’s a fiery prophet, devoted to God, and courageous. He would give the power brokers a run for their money! He is also pure and well spoken. He cares.”

Their questions back then were probably not so different from those of our own faith friends who are serving on the Pastoral Search Committee. They are ‘meeting’ candidates for the position on paper, and no doubt, asking: “Might *this* be the one God is preparing for Roslindale Congregational Church?”

**Wouldn’t *all* of us like to know how God is at work for our salvation during periods of confusion?!** From raising our children, to dealing with COVID, to wondering, “when will God’s eschaton finally break in?” I wish *I* knew! But then, Jesus’ words return to me: “It’s *not* for you to know the times or periods that God has set...but you will receive power when *the Holy Spirit* has come upon you.” (Acts 1:7-8) In other words, **it will be revealed.**

So during these periods when you and I *don’t* know how, or who, or what exactly God is doing, we should revisit today’s story about John and Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

**First of all, it shows us that we can *trust* that God is already at work for our salvation.** This is one thing that we *should* assume. We don’t have to wonder about this. After all, the One and Only was paving the way for John and Jesus to converge at the Jordan and work together in distinct roles on God’s mission. It hasn’t been that long since we read how this was revealed to their parents and witnesses at their births. (Luke 1) The love of God is busy now. You can count on it.

**Secondly, we can *participate* in God’s work for our salvation.** If you have a listening ear, a perceptive eye, and are part of a discerning community, you can follow the movement of the Dove. We can remember our own baptisms. We can pick up our feet and *together*, make the way by walking it. As they say in Twelve-Step addiction recovery groups: “If you work the program, the program works.”

*John* participated in God’s call out of the wilderness to preach the Messiah. The Holy Spirit gave him the words of warning, and the people learned through him that the Anointed would be filled with fire and power, able to judge rightly. **It was revealed.**

*Jesus* participated in God’s business, not only at the temple when he was twelve, but also at the river as a man of thirty. He came with others to the Jordan, blended in, prayed, and humbly bowed to baptism by water. Jesus laid his heart down, in other words, and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon him. It’s not clear who, if anyone besides Jesus, heard the divine voice, “This is my beloved,” *and* it would take a long time following his ministry before a handful would believe, but **the Messiah was revealed that day.**

**Trust and participate.** That’s when the revelation, the manifestation, the sign, the *epiphany*, for which this church season is named and for which we long, comes.