

Order of Service for 1-10-21 Recording

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Opening Hymn: *"To Jordan's River Came Our Lord"* - Hymn 405

The Beginning

P: We begin

C: **in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

P: We begin

C: **with the sign of the cross.**

P: We begin

C: **as we began, with water, Word, and Spirit in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

P: Let us begin

C: **the world all over again with Word and Spirit, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

P: Let us begin

C: **God's new creation adding the Word of life to the stuff of life.**

P: Let us begin

C: **By baptizing the world in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and with the sign of the cross.**

The Confession of Sins

P: Do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways?

C: **We do.**

P: Do you reject the old, the dead, the life apart from God?

C: **We do.**

P: Do you believe in God the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, and in the Holy Spirit?

C: **We do.**

P: Will you be baptized into the Christian faith, into a life of service, into a life of giving?

C: **We will! We have been! In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and with the sign of the cross.**

The Gift of Forgiveness

P: For if we become one with Him in dying as He did, in the same way we shall be one with Him by being raised to life as He was,

C: **For we know this: the old being has been put to death with Christ on His cross, in order that the power of the sinful self might be destroyed, so that we should no longer be the slaves of sin.**

P: For when a person dies, he is set free from the power of sin.

C: If we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him.

P: For we know that Christ has been raised from death and will never die again—death has no more power over Him.

C: The death He died was death to sin, once and for all; and the life He now lives is life to God.

P: In the same way you are to think of yourselves as dead to sin, but alive to God in union with Christ Jesus.

Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 1:1-5

R: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And 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.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Romans 6:1-11

R: What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Mark 1:4-11

P: John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to Him and were being baptized by Him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, “After me comes He who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 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 when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens

being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.”

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Creedal Statement: Sacrament of Baptism parts Third and Fourth, page 325

Sermon Hymn: “*Thy Strong Word*” - Hymn 578

Sermon: “*Let There Be Light*” – **Genesis 1:1-5**

Throughout the whole pandemic the hope has always been about the development of a vaccine. Normally such vaccines take years to become approved, but science has done it in less than a year. The vaccine is being given to people in health services, and some who are at high risk are now scheduled to receive it. Some of you may remember how the Salk vaccine brought such hope in the world of polio 60 years ago. It is another seeming victory of science over the world.

Science seems to be the answer again and again to the problems in this world. Science gives us hy-bred seeds that can produce far better yields in dry conditions. It is what we look to for answers to energy dependencies and climate change. It is what has allowed us to “zoom” when we haven’t been able to see each other. So it becomes more and more natural for us to look to science to solve our problems.

So where does that leave our faith? Our Old Testament lesson is the account of creation. We are told that our scientific knowledge has shown that account to be a fable, something for history books, not present reality. People have signs in their yards that say among other things that they believe that “Science is real,” which infers that we should trust in science over the Bible. Why should people go to church when they can do it from the comfort of home? Why should we even bother with church at all when the answers can be found in science? After all we are right across the street from Iowa State University of Science and Technology.

This is not a new thought. In 1966, just over 50 years ago, the distinguished Canadian-born anthropologist Anthony Wallace confidently predicted the global demise of religion at the hands of an advancing science: ‘belief in supernatural powers is doomed to die out, all over the world, as a result of the increasing adequacy and diffusion of scientific knowledge’. Wallace’s vision was not exceptional. On the contrary, the modern social sciences, which took shape in 19th-century Western Europe, saw the world they were living in and thought it would be that way for all people in the future. Religion would fade and be replaced by science.

But that didn’t happen. Look at the USA. The US is arguably the most scientifically and technologically advanced society in the world, and yet at the same time the most religious of Western societies. As the British sociologist David Martin concluded in *The Future of Christianity* (2011): “There is no consistent relation between the degree of scientific advance and a reduced profile of religious influence, belief and practice.”

Science gives great benefits. But think about what it can also do. Accidents are part of life. So are catastrophes. Two of Boeing's new 737 Max 8 jetliners, arguably the most modern of modern aircraft, crashed in the space of less than five months. A cathedral (Notre Dame in Paris) whose construction started in the 12th century burned before our eyes, despite explicit fire-safety procedures and the presence of an on-site firefighter and a security agent. If Notre-Dame stood for so many centuries, why did safeguards unavailable to prior generations fail? How did modernizing the venerable Boeing 737 result in two horrific crashes, even as, on average, air travel is safer than ever before?

Charles Perrow in his book Normal Accidents made a case for the obvious: Accidents *happen*. What he meant is that they *must* happen. Worse, according to Perrow, a humbling cautionary tale lurks in complicated systems: Our very attempts to stave off disaster by introducing safety systems ultimately increase the overall complexity of the systems, ensuring that some unpredictable outcome will rear its ugly head no matter what. Complicated human-machine systems might surprise us with outcomes more favorable than we have any reason to expect. They also might shock us with catastrophe.

We can see that with the pandemic. Even as the vaccine works to stop the spread of the disease, the long term effects will still be with us. The stress on people in caring facilities, on children cut off from each other away from schools, and on those who may have developed depression from it will continue. Science can only do so much.

Genesis one tells us. "In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth." There is nothing scientific about that. We can't prove it. Even our experience which tells us that we and the world we live in exist doesn't prove that, because it all might just be an image or a dream. Some theorists say that our universe is just a hologram projected by the real reality. But where science needs proof and has its limits, God does not. God is God whether or not we can prove or understand Him.

And what we see in Genesis is not just that God made the world, but how He did it. "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." There is no scientific process explained; just God says, and it is done. My own understanding on this account in Genesis 1 is shaped by what our former pastor, Richard Osslund said, "Genesis one is not about explaining creation, but a commentary on God's Word." That is why it begins the Bible. Everything else in the Scriptures is backed by the point that what God says, is.

But we can think, "Where is there proof for that?" If we look for proof we will always fall short. To prove something, you have to have some way to duplicate or measure it. People used to think that the sun went around the earth, but we have ways to prove by measurement and observation that it is just the opposite. But there is more we can't prove than what we can. Our measurements in space tell us that what we can measure—matter and energy—is only a fraction of the universe. Most of the universe is made up of so-called "dark matter" and "dark

energy” which we cannot observe. Our best scientific models for the universe can only explain it if there is an infinite number of universes and we just happen to inhabit the one we live in. The only way we could “prove” God is if we are God himself. And we know what happens when we try to be like that. We become like Adam and Eve who were told by the serpent, “Eat the fruit and you will be like God.”

We have something better than proof. We have God who says, “Let there be,” and our universe came to be. And it didn’t just come to be. It came so that you and I could live in it. The Word said, “Let there be light;” and there was light. That same Word said, “Rise up, take your cot, and walk,” and the paralyzed man walked. The Word said, “Lazarus, come out,” and Lazarus came out of the tomb alive. The Word says, “Your sins are forgiven,” and they are. The Word says, “You were baptized into My death so that as I rose from the dead, you can walk in newness of life.” The Word says, “This is My body; this is My blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” The Word says, “Whoever believes in Me has eternal life.”

“Let there be.” God’s Word is not in competition with science. In confirmation class I show students a cookbook and a car manual. I ask them if they can bake a cake with the car manual or change a transmission with a cookbook. That is what happens when we try to use Scriptures to do science or science to explain who we really are and why we are here. Scripture is God’s Word, the Word doesn’t answer our questions about how things work in this universe, but how we receive and live the life God offers to us in His Word—Christ Jesus.

Responsive Prayer

P: Let us pray, giving thanks to the Lord for the gift of baptism, which we all have received.

C: We praise You, O Lord; we thank You!

P: For the gift of dying with Christ—

C: We praise You, O Lord; we thank You!

P: For the gift of victoriously rising with Christ--

C: We praise You, O Lord; we thank You!

P: For the gift of new life in Christ—

C: We praise You, O Lord; we thank You!

P: For the gift of adoption by our heavenly Father—

C: We praise You, O Lord; we thank You!

P: For the gift of membership in Christ’s Body, the Church—

C: We praise You, O Lord; we thank You!

P: For the gift of the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in our midst—

C: We praise You, O Lord; we thank You!

P: For these and all the gifts and graces given us in Holy Baptism—

C: We praise You, O Lord; we thank You!

Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: *"Jesus, Once with Sinners Numbered"* - Hymn 404

The Prayer of Departure

P: Let us pray, asking God to help us remain faithful always to the new life into which we have been born in water and the Spirit. Christ Jesus, our Rock and Salvation, baptism makes us one with You in Your Kingdom.

C: Build Your Kingdom within us.

P: Christ Jesus, You offered living water to the Samaritan woman.

C: Lead us to the Fountain of Life.

P: Christ Jesus, You restored life to the widow's son.

C: Raise us from our death of sin.

P: Christ Jesus, You gave sight to the man born blind.

C: Lord, give us sight that we may see!

P: Christ Jesus, You made the leper clean.

C: Lord, if You will, You can make us clean.

P: Christ Jesus, You are the Good Samaritan Who heals our wounds.

C: Take pity on us; heal the wounds which sin has made in us.

P: Christ Jesus, Lord and Master of all, You calmed the fury of the storm.

C: Lord, save us lest we perish.

P: Christ Jesus, the words of Your teaching filled the crowds with astonishment.

C: You have the words of eternal life.

P: Christ Jesus, by Your Word You drove the unclean spirits from Mary Magdelene.

C: Protect us from the evil spirits.

P: Christ Jesus, through Peter You gave the crippled man the power to walk again.

C: Guide our faltering steps in the way of eternal life.

P: O Lord our God, You came to the rescue of Your chosen people in the desert. Fill us, we pray, with the strength and support of Your life so that, always secure in the comfort of Your presence, we may labor day by day for the building of Your Kingdom; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.

C: Amen! Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD. Let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.

P: You are in our midst, O Lord; Your name we bear; do not forsake us!

C: Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD. Let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Blessing... C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: *"All Who Believe and Are Baptized"* - Hymn 601

Postlude