

Our world is in turmoil. Our country just experienced an unprecedented attack on our Capitol and the members of Congress. A pandemic is raging through our cities and the world causing economic upheaval besides illness and death. We are in a time of great unrest and uncertainty. We have no idea when the pandemic will actually be done, and we can regather with family and friends. This is a time when we need to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us, individually and corporately. We are in a liminal space. A time between the old and what will be. It is not a comfortable time and we long for normalcy again in our lives. But what normal is in the future will not be the same as the old normal. We are moving into a new way of being as a society and as a church. But liminal space gives us the opportunity to listen to the Spirit, to discern where and how God is leading us as we follow Christ into the future.

As Jesus comes to John to be baptized in the wilderness the Jewish world is in turmoil with religious zealots seeking to overthrow the government, the Qumran community has left Jerusalem and is in the wilderness seeking to reform Judaism. Huge economic divides exist in society and death from illness is an everyday occurrence. *And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.* (Mark 1:6) *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.* (Mark 1:9) *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 1:10-11) As Jesus emerges from the waters of baptism the Spirit of God descends on him and he hears that he is the Beloved of God. Jesus is in a liminal space. Who he perceived himself to be is changed, he hears that he is the beloved of God, God's Son. What will happen now is something new. Jesus as the Beloved of Son of God is moving into a new way of being in the world. As he begins his ministry others will follow him into a new way of being in the world. God's kingdom will be revealed. But as Jesus enters and emerges from the waters of baptism there is a liminal period. A moment when the world holds its breath as the Spirit descends upon him.

At our own baptisms there was a moment of liminal space as we moved into becoming members of the Body of Christ. As Paul wrote to the Galatians, *as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.* (Gal 3:27-28) *And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.* (Gal 4:6) At our baptism we were transformed *as God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.* We became the children of God as we are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever. As Jesus was anointed by the Spirit at his baptism so we are anointed with oil to mark our anointing by the Spirit of Christ. From this moment on we are called to grow in our faith and listen to how Christ's Spirit is calling us to be in the world. A world that needs the love of God manifested in its midst. As the Spirit will drive Jesus into the wilderness after his baptism, so the Spirit will lead us into and through wilderness times. Times such as we are experiencing right now. We are living in a liminal time of change. It is a time to listen to the Spirit, to wait upon and discern how the Spirit is calling us to be in the future.

In our Collect for today we heard, "Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior." In a few moments we

will renew our Baptismal Vows, the covenant that we have with God to live and proclaim the Kingdom of God in our own lives. In this time of turmoil in our country and the world we, as disciples of Jesus Christ need to live into our Baptismal Vows. As we begin a new year, I encourage you to take these vows and intentionally live into them. Take them as your New Year's resolution. It is a resolution that will change not only you but the world around you.

In our baptismal vows we are asked to: continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers, to persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord, to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ, to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself, to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being. All actions that our world needs manifested today.

Bishop Curry this Friday published his reflections about this past week in our country he said: *I am a follower of Jesus of Nazareth because I believe that his way of love and his way of life is the way of life for us all. I believe that unselfish, sacrificial love, love that seeks the good and the welfare and the well-being of others, as well as the self, that this is the way that can lead us and guide us to do what is just, to do what is right, to do what is merciful. It is the way that can lead us beyond the chaos to community.*

Bishop Curry further asks us to be a blessing in our world. We do that by living out our baptismal covenant. The covenant that we made with God at our baptism. As we struggle with racism in this country Paul reminds us that, *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.* We need to treat each other as the beloved of God. We need to seek to serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves, to strive for justice and peace among all people. Our country lacks this vision this reality right now. In this liminal time of change, may we live into our baptismal vows to change our world. It will require risk and listening to the Spirit's guidance, to move beyond our own desires to hear the desire of God as we follow Jesus in our daily lives. As we renew our vows today may we God grant us the grace and courage to live into them.