

**Goal:** That the hearers would rejoice in God’s recreation through their baptism.

*“God said, ‘Let there be light.’” (Genesis 1: 3) (“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.” (Genesis 1: 1 – 4)* And suddenly, there was light, bright, warm, radiating light, full of life. Before God spoke, there was nothing. But God’s Word changed everything. Before God’s spoke His word, it was dark, the blackest of night, but now a divine light illumined all of creation. And God saw that the light was good.

God continued creating the same way. He called something into being and it was; land, water, sun, sky, cosmos, birds, trees, fish, animals, and man. God spoke, and suddenly it was. But we all know what happened to His creation. The devil began to twist God’s intention, *“Did God actually say...” (Genesis 3: 1) (“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3: 1)* And with just a few words, the devil tried to undo everything God had done. He tried to destroy the pinnacle of God’s creation, mankind, along with all of the birds and trees and fish and land, everything. But the devil isn’t God.

Only God is able to speak things into existence out of nothing. The devil can’t. As hard as the devil tries, he just can’t dissolve us away into nothingness. But the devil can get us to mess up God’s perfect creation. He can only whisper and try to deceive so that we would twist God’s creation into something that would resemble him; a world tattered with disobedience, people consumed with thoughts of only themselves, leading ultimately to death.

When Martin Luther explains the First Article, he writes, *“I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses.”* Our loving God has done all of these wonderful things for us. But as sinful creatures in this world, we could also say something about what the devil does. *“I believe that the devil has tried to destroy me and all creatures; that he has given me my cancer and my heart attack; he lured my eyes to lust for pornography, my ears with love for gossip, and he has plagued all my members*

*with wicked desires. My reason is beset by anger and my senses slowly begin to fail and my body sinks closer and closer to death.*” Luther never wrote that, but as people who’ve been made by God, we also realize that sin and the devil has twisted us in ways that God never intended.

What’s happened to God’s beautiful creation is sad. It’s sad that God’s beloved people have been twisted into what we are. God aches over this world and what has happened to it. He weeps every time we sin. The angels shudder every time we forget God. The saints in heaven cringe every time we choose the ways of death over God’s ways of life. That is why God became flesh and was born into His creation.

Jesus came to be baptized by John in the Jordan. (***“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 opening 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.” (Mark 1: 9 – 11)***) John was offering a baptism of repentance, but Jesus hadn’t sinned. No, Jesus came to the waters because He was sent by the Father to restore His creation. Jesus was the new creation for us in this world.

When God first created everything, the Spirit hovered over the waters, and the Word called it into being. Now, that Word became flesh in order to be baptized for you, in order to live the sinless life for you, in order to die your death for you, and in order to rise from the dead for you. And it is through your baptism that you are made a new creation in Jesus. So as we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, we’re reminded that our God hasn’t just left this fallen world to rot and decay. He didn’t look at the mess that we made and in disgust say forget it. Our God hasn’t abandoned us to the clutches of the devil. He hasn’t left you to die in death. But God, in your baptism into Christ is remaking you new.

A number of years ago, I went to a craft fair where I watched elderly gentleman sit on a chair surrounded by a bunch of dead branches. All around him were piles of dead, dried up, spindly sticks and in front of him was a bowl of water. What he did was amazing. He took these branches, soaked them in the water, pulled them out, and began to bend them, to reshape them, to mold them into shapes, into his new creations. Out of these lifeless branches his hands formed baskets and chairs, even purses. And as he created these objects, he said: *“May this chair support people for good conversations, for*

*talking and sharing. May this basket carry God's flowers for pleasure. May it carry baked goods to tired neighbors to feed bodies and nourish souls."* This man took dead branches and gave them new life. He reshaped things that looked like they were only good for kindling for a fire and gave them new lives as only he could imagine.

Today, we see how God has remade each of us in Jesus. Jesus wasn't baptized for Himself. He didn't need to be soaked in water to be God's new creation. But He knew you did. And it is through your baptism that you once again receive His light and life that the devil, sin, and hell can never overcome. As pastor Paul writes, ***"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."*** (Romans 6: 3 – 5)

So today, we celebrate not just Jesus' Baptism, but we celebrate all that God has done and continues to do for us through our baptisms. For it was at that font that the Spirit called us to and gathered us around God, like dead branches. The Father placed each of us in that baptismal water and as pulled each of us out said, *"I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Your bodies are now remade. They won't just be filled with cancer; they'll be filled with my body, which promises an Easter resurrection. Your souls don't have to lust anymore; now you can long for a life lived in me. Your ears are now new; they will be used to hear my Word of salvation. And your senses, even though they will slow and fail as death approaches, they will tingle on that day of the resurrection as all my children are raised from the dust of death to eternal life"*

In the beginning, by speaking the Word God created all things, and now through water and the Word remakes you to be His own. And know that God will never abandon you. He knows your pains and despite living in this fallen, sin corrupted world, He's called you to be new creation in Christ. And you are. You are new. You are forgiven. You are alive, even though you were dead. In Christ, you will live even though you will die. The devil has tried so hard to destroy God's creation, but he's failed. He's failed because God hasn't abandoned you. And God never will. Amen.