**Dinosaur Eggs | Mark 1:4-11**

**Rev. Erin Dickey | January 10th, 2021**

*Riverside Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) - Jacksonville, FL*

*digital link to the full service is:*[*https://www.facebook.com/RiversideAvenueCC/videos/461434604853684*](https://www.facebook.com/RiversideAvenueCC/videos/461434604853684)

Our scripture this morning comes from the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 1, verses 4 through 11:

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 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. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He 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."

The Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Will you please pray with me?

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, our Rock and our Redeemer. In these ancient words, may we find a living word. Amen.

At some point, most of us have played with dinosaur eggs. You know the ones where you get a toy egg and you don’t know which exact dinosaur will hatch from the egg. The key to making it hatch is water. You gently place the egg in water – and you want either a clear glass or a clear bowl so you can get the full effect. It takes several minutes but slowly, the shell starts to dissolve, and the dinosaur’s true self begins to reveal itself. Finally, after an agonizing wait and unbridled anticipation, the wise triceratops, the mighty t-rex, or the humble brachiosaurus emerges from the water in all of its glory, ready for action! Then, you play with the dinosaur for about 3 minutes and promptly forget that it exists because the fun of the dinosaur eggs rests in the water. We learn from an early age that transformation happens in the water.

The same is true for making rock candy. You get rock candy by boiling sugar into water until it dissolved, pouring that cavity juice into a jar, and placing a string or skewer in it, waiting for the candy to form around the string. The transformation from sugar to crystalized sugar disguised as candy, takes place in the water.

When we go into the water, we are transformed. Sometimes it can feel a little odd going from Baby Jesus to adult Jesus within just a matter of weeks so it is appropriate that we make that transition, that transformation in the water where Jesus is baptized.

We see multiple transformations happening in this passage. For John, he transforms from being the one who prepares the way for Christ to come, to being the one who baptizes Jesus into ministry. Creation itself is transformed when Jesus emerges from the water, the heavens are torn apart. The very water itself, the River Jordan, which once was a barrier between the Israelites and the Promised Land, is transformed to be a bridge between Heaven and Earth.

Transformation happens in the water.

John calls out not only to those who were gathered that day, but to all, that we need to repent and be baptized, to shed the shell that keeps us from revealing our true selves, so that like Christ, we too can be transformed in the water.

We repent of whatever keeps us from experiencing the fullness of God’s love.

Perhaps that is self-depreciation.

Perhaps it is doubt.

Perhaps it is plateauing in reading and studying scripture.

Perhaps it is limiting how we share what God has given us.

Perhaps, as we have seen this past week, that repentance is of white supremacy and the evils of systemic racism that continue to threaten justice.

Perhaps it is complacency and silence.

The act of repentance is perhaps once we need to speak of more and as we do so, we remember our baptismal vows. We commit to proclaiming the name of Christ, the peace of Christ in all that we say and do. We commit to the hope and renewal that awaits us in the waters. Repentance is not a time to name our shame but to become vulnerable to hope, to willingly submit to the transformation that happens in the water.

Like Christ, we experience the transformation of the Holy Spirit when we step into the waters. And right now, we need to step into those waters. We need transformation is ways that are vastly different - that have us do more than just talk about the need for peace, but to actively engage in ways that allow the Gospel of justice, the Gospel of compassion, the Gospel of denouncing violence and imperialism, to be the catalyst of transformation.

When we can’t bring the world to the water, we need to bring the water to the world.

We need to remember the power of those waters.

In our tradition, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we typically experience those waters once in our lives. While we practice believer’s baptism and baptize by immersion, we recognize all forms of baptism and do not require someone to be re-baptized when joining the church. Instead, we are invited to remember our baptism – even if we were too young to truly remember it, we remember the words of scripture that led us in and out of those waters.

Like the dinosaur eggs, the transformation of baptism is not instant. Instead, the water initiates the process of transformation. Each of us have our own baptism stories – some funny, some deeply spiritual, all holy. Mine is fairly common to most people who grew up in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). When I was old enough to go to church camp after the 3rd grade, I made my confession of faith. When I came home from camp, I did pastor’s class with my Pastor, Rev. Linda Hopkins, and learned about the disciples, the Bible, what it meant to be baptized, and was asked to talk about what it meant to me.

As a 9-year-old, I wasn’t sure beyond it being what I was “supposed” to do to keep learning about my faith, but slowly the shell began to chip away.

Around high school, I asked about being re-baptized because I felt like I was finally understanding what it meant but then realized I didn’t need to start all over, the Spirit was working that whole time and would continue to work.

It wasn’t until my early 20’s, when I prepared to baptize youth for the first time, that it felt like the shell had fully dissolved.

When I was preparing to baptize Catherine and Adrianna, my first baptisms of the non-stuffed animal variety, my Pastor, Mark, told me to get ready because there was something holy about being in those waters that we can never explain, but you know that the Spirit is at work within them.

And like always, Mark was right.

Just preparing the words that would be read in those water was emotional for me but when it came time to step into them, the transformation of the Spirit continued to take hold, to pull apart the shell, the barriers that keep us from experiencing the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Every so often, I step back into those holy water, immersing God’s beloveds, helping the shell to slowly dissolve. Sharing in the transformation of baptism is a holy, holy, honor – one that takes places in the water but carries into all of Creation, one that we are each called to share in whether we are in the waters or not because we are called to remember our baptism – to remember how like Christ, we feel the waters of Creation around us, we become one with the Holy Spirit. Just like it was for Jesus, baptism wasn’t the capstone of his ministry – it was the catapult – it was what kicked off his ministry of teaching, of healing, of being present with God’s children. The transformation started in the water.

We are water people. And just as we are called into the water, we are called out of the water, to do the ministry of Jesus – to teach, to heal, to be present with God’s children.

When we emerge from the water, where will we go? Like the dinosaur revealed from the egg, will our transformation last for just a few minutes before we are set aside?

Or like Jesus, for whom the Heavens parted and God’s affirmation was heard through all of Creation, will we go on to live as witnesses of how the Holy Spirit has worked and is still working within us?

We also remember that baptism comes in many forms and while we primarily associate it with water, the transformation comes from the Spirit and we can experience that transformation outside of the water, too.

When you move into the water, whether literally or figuratively, when you experience the work of the Spirit, we see the shell slowly dissolve. In repentance, our shell begins to dissolve. In repentance, we become vulnerable to the hope that awaits us in Christ.

Whatever that shell is, the Spirit begins to slowly dissolve it.

As we shed the shell, as we emerge from the water, we slowly see our true selves, our selves that are created in God’s very image reveal itself.

What we see isn’t a wise triceratops, a mighty t-rex, or a humble brachiosaurus.

No, but what we do see is the wisdom of scripture passed down to us, the mightiness of God’s grace poured over us, and the humility of Jesus’ ministry entrusted with us.

We don’t emerge as dinosaurs, as neat as they may be, we emerge as children of God, God’s beloved, with whom God is well pleased, and whom God calls into ministry. Amen.