

# Connect With Your Belovedness

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[ 0 : 00 ] We Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 3 : 00 ] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

What's going to happen next? Who are we? How do we make sense of this? And this morning we come to remember where the plumb line is.

And for those of you who don't know what a plumb line is, it's a weight on the end of a string that shows what straight is. It shows where grounded is.

It shows where grounded is. And this morning, as we remember and we remember who we are. Who we are. Who we are.

[ 5 : 05 ] People of faith. Baptized, blessed, anointed. And there's nothing greater than we can do in this season of chaos than to remember who we are.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, help us in this time of worship to acknowledge that we are yours. We are yours.

To remember who we are so that no matter how the winds blow and the earth opens and we worry about what's next. We are yours, Lord.

We are yours. We are yours. Amen. Good morning.

Would you stand and worship with me? You can hum along and speak the words and we just worship God together. Lord, praise God to this hour to sing down, and we will be more determined than God in our hearts.

[ 6 : 40 ] I am Dine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice and ■■■ed, O Lord,olare Michio, by praise God. I am O Lord, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice and told Thy love to me.

And be closer drawn to Thee. Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died.

Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To Thy precious bleeding side.

Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord, By the power of grace divine. Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope, And my will be lost in Thine.

Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To Thy precious bleeding side.

[ 8 : 00 ] You may be seated. So now, good morning.

It is good to see you. It's good to be back this morning. You found a bottle of water on your seat, Or near your seat, I hope. And if you didn't, you can grab one from a seat that's not taken.

And let me just say that it's not because I'm going to preach so long That you're going to need water. I'm the only one that touched the bottles, And they were sanitized, So I just want you to let you know that.

And so you'll figure out in a little while why they're here. And you're welcome to drink them as long as you are careful. Well, maybe not.

Right, Louis? Not. It is a good thing to be here together.

[ 9 : 05 ] It's a good thing to be with the people who might be watching online Who didn't get a bottle of water. But I invite them to get a cup of water or a bottle of water At some point during the worship As we go towards this time of remembering our baptism As we remember the baptism of Jesus Christ.

I don't know about you, but my Christmas season has come to a close. Why is that? Because I finally mailed the package that came after family left To the right person yesterday.

And no, I haven't taken down any of my Christmas decorations. But I will. Because we are starting into a new year. And it is a new year.

And someone put on social media recently, I'd like to cancel my subscription. And I was like, to what? To 2021. I'm like, well, it's kind of soon to do that.

We are people of hope and people of faith. And each Sunday we gather, each Saturday we gather, Is an opportunity for us to come to a place where we say, All to Jesus, I surrender.

[ 10 : 26 ] And that is for us. Our hearts, our faith, our trust, our gifts, our witness, and our service.

And so I invite us, as we hear the music, And we are reminded of all the ways that we can give of ourselves, To come before God in this time offering, All we have, which is us.

Amen. Amen. Once we have such a eine and powerful entity for us, To come before God in this moment, To come before God in the world, To come before God in this moment. May heaven And hail A Phoenix And To me So To come before God in this world, To come before God in this■■■■■.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[ 13 : 15 ] Amen. Amen.

Praise Him, Lord, the heavenly host Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost Amen Gracious and loving God, you have taught us that the essence of love is in our giving.

How we share what we freely have and what we are willing to share with others. Please receive this gift from us as it goes to the honor and glory of your name.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen. Take your seats. Good morning, church. It is indeed a joy to be in God's house with you, whether we are connected online or whether we are here in person together.

It is a gift of God that we can come and open our hearts and have that conversation with God that is unique. That time of prayer together moves God when God's people can come in prayer as one.

[ 15 : 29 ] We know we have several concerns in our congregation this morning. There are those who need medical attention and those who are in desperate need of healing. We also know that there are those dealing with some very difficult personal situations, some economic situations.

So let's be mindful of all of that as we come to God together in prayer today. Let's pray. Gracious and almighty God, thank you for the ability to be together.

As we have opened our hearts and are seeking your face this morning, we come mindful of the ways in which you have poured yourself out to us.

We have known that joy, that joy of giving our hearts to you, knowing that joy of having you move among us, seeing your hand at work and circumstances, feeling that warmth of your smile in our lives and in our spirits.

So Lord, we come today praising you for who you are and all that you have done. On this day where we are mindful of baptism and what it means for those who have known that special joy and have made that special commitment, for those who are exploring and maybe thinking about that step, and those who are not sure and may never have heard the story.

[ 17 : 09 ] Move among us, Lord, because we celebrate what it means to pledge our hearts to you in this way and to make that gesture, that step. We come today knowing that the Spirit moves among us, especially in those who need healing.

It would touch bodies who would be restored to wholeness and health. For those who are providing care and need strength and need to feel their spirits renewed, we pray on their behalf as well.

For those professionals who do that work, Lord, whether you work through doctors, nurses, and others, or whether you work supernaturally on your own, we come on behalf of those we know and those we love, anticipating your movement toward health and wholeness.

For those who need healing in other ways, relationships that need to be healed, situations and circumstances that are broken, those who need your touch and the ways in which they are moving through the world, those who are experiencing deep, profound need.

Lord, we know that you know all things, but as we are here, we cry, use us. We pray that we will see you move in all of those people's lives.

[ 18 : 34 ] And Lord, as we continue to strive, as we continue to move and work toward a beloved community in a world of justice and peace, we need you to continue to guide us, to lead us, to inspire us by your word and your presence, to let those who claim your name walk through this world in ways that show the world the truth of what it means to be loved by Christ.

So Lord, as you move among us today, we praise your name because we know we are difference-making people because you've made a difference in us.

And for that, we are grateful. For that, we come and worship. For that, we lay ourselves before you.

All of this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Good morning.

Good morning.

[ 20 : 11 ] Good morning. Our readings this morning are from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 3, verses 13 through 17, and the book of Isaiah, chapter 42, verse 1.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, I need to be baptized by you.

And do you come to me? Jesus replied, Let it be so now. It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.

Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment, heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

And a voice from heaven said, This is my Son, whom I love. With him I am well pleased.

[ 21 : 23 ] And then from Isaiah, Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one, in whom I delight. I will put my spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen. Sometimes, one of the hardest things that can happen in our lives is that we don't remember who we are.

Now, I'm not talking about amnesia. I'm not talking about a concussion. I'm not talking about a brain injury. I'm talking about life circumstances that have us sort of spinning around and disoriented in a way that we sometimes are thinking, Wait.

What is this? What is this world where people are isolated and in their homes where hospitals are full, where people are afraid of being out in public and with people they love?

What is this world? Who am I if I don't have my friend gatherings, my family gatherings, my groups that I go to, my this and my that?

[ 23 : 11 ] Who am I if there is chaos and even violence that I see on TV or read about in the news? This isn't the world I know.

This isn't the story that I'm familiar with. But it's not just a pandemic and chaos in our country that can disorient people.

We can be disoriented by losing a spouse. And you think, Wait. I don't know who I am in this new chapter of life.

We can experience this as people struggle with things like infertility where they all thought I was going to be a parent.

Who am I if I'm not? In divorce, there are so many places where we can become disoriented in terms of not feeling like this is what I thought it would be or I am in a place where I remember.

[ 24 : 23 ] Who am I? We don't all experience that. I think we all experience disorientation even if we don't name it or feel it.

Most everyone who goes through some kind of great loss will experience disappointment, disorientation, whether it's a job or a romantic relationship or a job that provided stability to a home that provided income.

Sometimes it's our bodies. They don't do what they used to do. And when we realize that we can't do what we used to do we wonder, well then what?

Who am I? I'm mindful of the ways in which we are called in this new year.

More than ever before, more than any time I remember, although I can remember some challenging new years as we saw what was behind us, but more than ever this year I feel like we need to be able to say I know who I am.

[ 25 : 46 ] I know who I am because when we don't know who we are we sometimes grab around for things and people and beliefs and influence that isn't really us.

But in our desperation to find something to hang on to we sometimes grab what's the nearest thing available. Anything that grounds us we might grab it because we think oh this is going to be it.

And there's a reason why people are told after a loss in their life, after a major move or job change or even after a colonoscopy not to make big decisions.

You might think some of you haven't had colonoscopies yet. Why do they tell you that? Because you're impaired. Because you've had anesthesia and you shouldn't make big decisions. Most surgeries afterwards you're told don't make any major decisions because things aren't right.

But sometimes we don't listen. so we look for answers. We look for stability.

[ 27 : 09 ] We look for authority. We look for ways to ground ourselves. But we're doing it while we're spinning.

And in this time of this past year and in our personal lives when things have disoriented us we have sometimes forgotten where to look.

The baptism of Jesus is an interesting thing and sometimes people are like well why did Jesus have to be baptized? What's up with that?

In the church when a person is baptized if they're baptized as an adult there's a part of that that is the forgiveness of sins and the new life and the water is sort of a washing clean of all that is behind us.

When babies are baptized we don't really talk about that but we baptize them as new official members of a household of faith.

[ 28 : 14 ] Essentially acknowledging their purity and their innocence. Some people challenge well Jesus didn't sin so he didn't need that.

He was God's son so he didn't need to be claimed. He sure didn't need to be recognized as an official part of the church so why?

I would like to say that I think that Jesus baptism was for us. Jesus baptism was for you and for me so that we could see or read in the scriptures the claiming of Jesus by God.

The anointing of Jesus for the ministry that he was about to embark on. Anointed and surrounded by the spirit and God's blessing spoken upon him.

That's for us so that we can recognize that the sacredness of what happened with Jesus is that same sacredness that's for us both in baptism and in faith in Jesus because it tells us God says this is my beloved son whom I love and with whom I am well pleased.

[ 29 : 41 ] If people ever doubt well is Jesus or isn't Jesus here it is in the scriptures this is my beloved son I love him and I am well pleased with him.

It's a plumb line for us on this day in January as we are looking ahead into what we don't know we're looking behind at what we don't understand and we've never been able to tell the future let's be honest we've never been able to say I know what's in front of me and I all I can do is look what's behind me but do I go or do I stay do I charge ahead with a sense of abandon and not knowing where my grounding is or do I stay stuck in some security that maybe I believe will guard me or protect me who are we as people of faith in this new year and what is our call sometimes we might be helped by understanding what is not our call in the scriptures and also in our baptismal covenant which we will look at in a few minutes is the call to the greatest commandment love the

Lord your God with all your heart your soul your strength your mind and love your neighbor as yourself and someone wisely wrote that you can't love Jesus and hate your neighbor does that make sense if you love Jesus and Jesus tells us to love our neighbor then we will love our neighbor is that easy no is that immediate no because we're humans and we have opinions and we have standards and we have a sense of right and wrong and our sense of right and wrong we think sometimes might match up with scripture and sometimes it's just our interpretation but one of the things that scripture tells us is there's no person's existence that is right or wrong well not wrong every person's existence is right what they do with that existence may not be but we know as scripture teaches us that we are called to be people who remember who we are

I have called you so many times in the scriptures we hear God in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament tell us I have called you to be healers lovers teachers people of the spirit people of the word now we often have to figure out what that might look like but that is a lot of interpretation so my call for us this morning is that in the world that spins and turns and wounds people and wounds us and sometimes creates chaos that we can simply not even believe believe the one thing we can always do is go back and remember who we are go back and remember that whether you were baptized as a baby and you don't remember most of us if we were baptized as babies we don't remember if we're parents of children that we had baptized as babies it's our job to help our children remember their baptism it's our job as a church as

Sunday school teachers and youth group leaders and Bible study teachers to help people to remember their baptism because there is no greater thing than a parent saying your child your child yes mine but yours Lord and I commit myself to raising this child in a household of faith I commit myself to raising a child to learn the teachings of Jesus I commit myself to remembering my own baptism as I help my children to remember theirs because when people are lost and they don't remember their hearts are broken their words sometimes are unkind or self-destructive sometimes when people don't remember who they are or whose they are they flail about and they they hit and I don't necessarily mean physically but sometimes that's the case sometimes people are so lost in themselves in depression and anxiety and mental health issues or just in the overwhelm of life that they don't remember you are my beloved child with whom

[ 35 : 39 ] I am well pleased that's why the water bottles say that because if we were going to renew our baptism then you would come up here and I would one of us would make the sign of a cross on your hand or you would touch water and you would remember even if you don't in your mind your baptism you would remember what you promised if you were old enough or what was promised on your behalf I believe I believe that some of the healing that is needed across the land around the world kind of goes back to the song that we heard Sue play and the words it's one of my favorite songs that

Lauren Daigle sings called You Say You Say which means what God says and what I say I say I'm not enough and you say I am yours I say that I'm not worthy you say you are mine I say I'm all alone and you say no you're not alone I say I don't belong and you say you are mine because the proclamation that happens at the end of the baptismal story is the skies open the Holy Spirit descends like a dove and God's voice thunders I imagine it thundering out you are my son my beloved with you I am well pleased now God isn't pleased about everything we do there's no question we're humans we make mistakes on a regular basis but who we are who we are deep inside is the beloved son or daughter of God with whom

God is well pleased because when God took the dirt of the earth and formed us out of it and breathed life into us God said it is good God created us and in our baptism we are reminded once again of who we belong to and who we belong to gives us what we need to get through the wind and the chaos and the storms and even feeling sort of slapped around and lost because if we can find the plumb line then as the world spins around us we may have anxiety we may have fear we may be disappointed or angry or just don't care but we will not be lost because in that space we are reminded who we are and so

I have asked for us to look at these baptismal promises and some of them their wording doesn't always work for this context of us being not baptizing but I invite you to remember the promises and I invite you to hold this water and I invite you to respond and I invite you to think about what this means for you and the greatest commandment on behalf of the whole church I ask you do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness reject the evil powers of this world and repent of your sin I do do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves

I do do you confess Jesus Christ as your savior put your whole trust in his grace and promise to serve him as your lord in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages nations and races I do will you nurture one another in Christ's holy church that by your teaching and example we each might be guided to accept God's grace for ourselves to profess our faith openly and to lead a Christian life I will do you as Christ's body the church reaffirm both your rejection of sin and your commitment to Christ we do will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include those around you and beyond you in your care with God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ we will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness that they may grow in their trust of

[ 41 : 27 ] God and be found faithful in their service to others we will pray for them that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life may it be so may it be so that we hold close this affirmation of who we are called to be that no matter what the world throws at you at me at any one of us it can never take away who we are and who God has made us to be I want to share with you in closing before we go to communion the words of a song that I love and it's called you are mine I will come to you in the silence I will lift you from all your fear you will hear my voice

I claim you as my choice be still and know that I am near I am hope for all who are hopeless I am eyes for all who long to see in the shadows of the night I will be your light come and rest in me do not be afraid I am with you I have called you each by name come and follow me and I will bring you home I love you and you are mine I am strength for all the despairing healing for the ones who dwell in shame all the blind will see and all the lame will run free and all will know my name do not be afraid I am with you I have called you each by name come follow me I will bring you home I love you and you are mine

I am the word that leads all to freedom I am the peace the world cannot give I will call your name I will embrace your pain stand up now walk and live it is so appropriate that as we approach this table and share in this sacrament that no matter what we bring we are reminded God knows who you are you are beloved sons and daughters of God the Lord be with you lift up your hearts let us give thanks to the

Lord our God it is right and a good and a joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you father almighty creator of heaven and earth before the mountains were brought forth or you had formed the earth from everlasting to everlasting you alone are God you created light out of darkness and brought forth life on the earth you formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life when we turned away and our love failed your love remained steadfast you delivered us from captivity made covenant to be our sovereign God and spoke to us through your prophets so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join in this unending hymn holy holy holy lord god of power and might heaven and earth are full of your glory hosanna in the highest blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord hosanna in the highest holy are you and blessed is your son jesus christ in whom you have revealed yourself our light and our salvation in his baptism and in table fellowship he took his place with sinners your spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people by the baptism of his suffering death and resurrection you gave birth to your church and delivered us from slavery to sin and death and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit on the night in which he gave himself up for us he took bread he gave thanks to you and broke the bread and gave it to his disciples and said do this in remembrance of me and when the supper was over he took the cup and gave thanks to you gave it to his disciples and said drink from this all of you in remembrance of my blood the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me and so in remembrance of these mighty acts in Jesus

Christ we offer ourselves praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith Christ has died Christ is risen Christ will come again pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and cup make them be for us the body and the blood of Christ that we may be for the world that we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood by your spirit make us one with Christ one with each other and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet through your son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit in your holy church all honor and glory is yours almighty father now and forever amen let us join together in the prayer that

[ 48 : 40 ] Jesus taught us our father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not to temptation deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever amen I invite you to take off your masks and open the side that has this little cracker and let us share together the body of Christ broken for you the blood of Christ was shed for you

I invite you as you hear this closing song to hear the truth of what Jesus baptism and Jesus life and death and resurrection because it makes you and I beautiful things with us whatever way you can all this pain

I wonder if I'll ever find my way I wonder if my life could really change at all all this earth could all that is lost ever be found could a garden spring up from this ground at all you make beautiful you make beautiful things out of the dust you make beautiful things you make beautiful things out of us us all around all around hope is ringing up from this old ground out of chaos life is being found in you you you make beautiful things you make beautiful things out of the dust you make beautiful things you make beautiful things out of us us you make me new you make me new you are making me new you make me new you make me new you are me you

Make me new you are many you me new you make me new you are making me new you make me new you are making You make beautiful things, you make beautiful things out of the dust.

You make beautiful things, you make beautiful things out of us.

[ 54 : 02 ] As you go from this place, day by day into this new year, may you remember who you are.

And as you walk through your days, when you look at others, maybe they need to be reminded of who they are. Maybe they need to be reminded that they are loved.

Let us go and not only know the peace, but be the peace.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Amen. Amen.

[ 55 : 12 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 57 : 42 ] Thank you.