

Unstuck WEEK TWO January 10, 2021 Baptism of the Lord

SCREEN: U.S. Capitol Dome image

Where were you when you heard that a mob was attacking our capitol?

This past Wednesday, January 6th, was a very dark day in our nation's history.

Years from now, I think we will always remember where we were and

what we were doing as the attack unfolded in real time across our screens.

I was getting ready to drive to my mom's for dinner,

but decided to turn on the TV to catch the news

and could not believe what I was watching.

Is this really happening in America?

Sadly, the answer was yes.

This wasn't just a tragedy for our nation,

but for the whole world which looks to us as a shining city on a hill -

the beacon of democracy - that promotes peaceful protest,

free election of our leaders and the transfer of power after the votes are cast.

And in one day - in just a few hours -

everything we stood for was under attack... *from within!*

How did we get here?

I don't pretend to have all the answers,

but it is pretty clear that we've lost our way.

We've forgotten who we are.

Many citizens have forgotten America's story.

We all need to rediscover our story, embrace it again,

otherwise we will remain entrenched and divided.

We will remain stuck.

SCREEN: Unstuck main screen

This is Week Two of our message series titled, Unstuck.

This month we are focusing on how we can get unstuck

emotionally and spiritually from whatever keeps us from realizing our potential.

When we're stuck we are unsure of where to go, what to do,

and how to channel our emotions and our energy -

especially when things in life break down.

And we've all experienced this over the past year,

and we are seeing it play out now again.

In this series, we are hearing powerful messages from God and scripture about how to get unstuck so we can move forward in our lives and our faith.

Last week on Epiphany the magi taught us the importance of

paying attention to tension - of facing whatever makes us angry, sad or frustrated.

Today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord.

And here's our focus this day:

SCREEN: pay attention to your narrative

What does this mean?

What I mean by 'narrative' is the stories that others tell about us and ones we tell ourselves that define who we are.

In the Gospel, Jesus shows us why it is so important to pay attention to our narrative.

Now, let me start by setting the scene for today's Gospel reading.

John the Baptist is at the Jordan River preparing the way of the Lord.

This might sound simplistic to say,

but his mission was to help the citizens of his nation get unstuck so they could welcome the messiah.

And they were stuck - they'd lost their way.

They had forgotten who they were and their relationship with God had broken down.

But it wasn't always like that.

There were glorious moments in their history when

God's Chosen people were close to the Lord and their relationship was strong.

But then they'd get comfortable and lazy and eventually stray from their faith.

They'd sin and disaster would strike.

Then they'd repent and turn back to God.

And this cycle was repeated over and over for centuries.

So they were stuck.

Those who went out to Jordan to be baptized were preparing for the messiah who would come and save them.

The problem was, the Jewish people couldn't agree on what the messiah would look like when he came.

Would he be a mighty warrior like King David who would march on Jerusalem to drive out the Romans?

Would he be a wise ruler like King Solomon?

They couldn't agree.

Today's Gospel describes the moment when help arrived to get them unstuck:

SCREEN: Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John.

On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him.

And a voice came from the heavens,

“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Jesus's ministry began and he called others to follow him.

Follow - a pretty simple concept.

It requires movement, taking steps, it requires getting unstuck.

Today we not only celebrate Jesus's baptism, but our own.

And just as Jesus heard the voice of God telling him who he is, on the day you and I were baptized,

God told us who we are and who we are called to be in life.

Who are we?

The communion song this month at our online Mass is a favorite of mine titled, *Who You Say I Am*.

(We'll hear it today).

Here's the refrain I'll spare you my singing voice!

SCREEN: I'm a child of God, yes I am.

I am chosen, not forsaken

I am who you say I am.

God sees us for who we really are - who we really are.

Not as the world sees us, and not as others in our life see us.

But as children of God who are loved, forgiven and chosen.

Here's what this means:

You are not your sins or failures or the worst thing you've ever done.

God says to you and me, *"you are mine and I will always love you."*

So we have to make a choice.

We can either allow others to say who we are OR

we can listen to God who tells us who we are.

If we allow others to define us - to write our narrative -

we'll never be happy in life.

Why?

Sometimes others want to tell us what we can't do or can't be.

Maybe you've heard someone say to you:

"You'll never amount to anything.

You always give up. You're a failure."

Maybe you've had people who never let you forget

your imperfections and failures, say things like:

"There you go again. You always do this.

You are such a disappointment."

A constant barrage of these negative comments can result in you

believing the story others have about who you are.

Jesus at his baptism at the Jordan listened to his heavenly Father

who said this:

SCREEN: You are my beloved son; with you I am well pleased.

Jesus listened to the only person who mattered, not just that day, but everyday -

it kept him going through times of crisis and doubt.

And he would need reminding because Jesus faced many temptations.

Right after his baptism by John, Jesus went into the wilderness

and three times was tempted by the Devil to be someone other than who he was.

Because Jesus remembered what his Father said to him at the Jordan River,

he could resist Satan's temptations.

We need to be like Jesus.

We need to hear the voice of God clearly, loudly, above all other voices -

hear God telling us who we are and who we are called to be:

SCREEN: you are my beloved child; with you I am well pleased.

Now, there's a second part of this message which can be even more challenging and it's the stories we tell ourselves to justify negative behavior.

And after the year we've been through, this is something we can all struggle with.

Here are some examples of the stories we can tell ourselves:

"I normally don't drink this much, eat this much, watch this much TV, but it's a pandemic so it's okay."

Or, *"I'm not stealing from a person, just a big corporation."*

"The rules don't make sense to me, so I don't need to follow them."

Or, *"I'm allowed to be mean and angry because I don't like where our country is headed."*

We can tell ourselves all kinds of things to justify harmful and hurtful behavior.

But if we believe these stories - these lies -

we end up stuck spiritually and emotionally.

As I said on Epiphany, each week of this series

there is a homework assignment to help you dig deeper into the message.

Last week I challenged you to reflect on where in your life you feel stuck.

Maybe it's in one of the ways I just mentioned or another.

For this week I'd ask you to answer this two part question:

SCREEN: 1 What untrue stories have others told about me which I need to stop believing?

2 What untrue stories have I told myself that I need to stop believing?

Take some time this week to reflect on these questions, pray about them, then write out your answer and keep it someplace safe.

This can be a good first step - a way to move forward and allow God to help you get unstuck. Amen. +

Please stand.

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Since today is the Baptism of the Lord, in place of the usual Profession of Faith, I will invite you to renew your baptismal promises.

So if you are ready I ask you to respond “I do” to each of these questions:

Do you reject Satan, and all his works and empty promises? **R. I do.**

Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth? **R. I do.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was born of the Virgin Mary was crucified, died, and was buried,
rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father? **R. I do.**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting? **R. I do.**

God, the all-powerful Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has given us
a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and forgiven all our sins.

May he also keep us faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.