

### **Luke 3:7-17; 21-22**

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with [b] the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

**P: Thanks be to God.**

#### **Opening Our Gifts: The Gift of Baptism**

- We are in a series called, "Opening our Gifts."
- Today's Sermon is entitled, "The Gift of Baptism."
- What does baptism mean in the United Methodist Church?
  - Baptism is based on the doctrine of prevenient grace, the grace that goes before.
  - Baptism is the symbol of God's love poured out on us before we are able to understand or respond.
  - Parents and the congregation promise to raise the child in the faith.
  - People respond to God's love for themselves after baptism in confirmation.
  - Baptism, while it may be reaffirmed, can never be repeated.
- Baptism is God's gift of love to us. Let us open the gift of baptism.