

During his graduate studies,
Dr. Carl Jung, renowned psychologist,
was rummaging around through collections of Latin proverbs,
and came across this phrase:

“Vocatus atque non vocatus, Deus aderit.”

Jung had this quotation carved in stone
over the door of his home in Zurich Switzerland.

It is said that these were his last words.
They are also engraved on his tombstone.

We might translate this phrase into English as
“Bidden or unbidden, God is present”

Or more roughly

“God is here, whether you like it or not.”

This is also the phrase which most characterizes
the scene of Jesus’ baptism in our gospel lesson this morning.

A crowd has gathered to see John in the wilderness,
baptizing sinners in the River Jordan.

Jesus joins the crowd,
wading into the muddy shallows.
He gets baptized,
Like everyone else.

Then suddenly,
GOD bursts on the scene from above....

Physically!

The dove swoops down,
The voice of the Heavenly Father booms out
“This is my beloved son; He pleases me. Listen to him.”

This story in all the gospels implies
a disruption,
an interruption,
A divine physical presence,
not at all expected by the people,
nor by Jesus’s cousin John
who was doing the baptizing,
.... Perhaps unexpected even by Jesus himself.

How many times have you and I been genuinely surprised

By God's presence in our lives?

We come to church,
We go home.

We eat our meals,
Do our work,
Play our games....
Day after day after day.

It's about time God shook us up,
Stirred the pot,
Upped the ante,
Made us at least a little bit uncomfortable.

That is what being a baptized Child of God means...
being open to the new,
the unexpected,
the challenging.

In Baptism
God calls us to adventures,
Changes,
Challenges,
In a word

In Baptism,
God calls us to growth.

I was raised in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

Like many of the older ones among us,
I was raised in a religious environment
where baptism in water was assumed.

It was less an invitation to adventure
And more like a fire insurance policy
Or a membership card
To make sure you'd get past the pearly gates
And into God's presence when you die.

But if there is one thing Jesus's own baptism teaches us
Is that this weird thing called baptism
Is what let's the cat out of the bag....

It's the inauguration of an adventurous journey
For which no one can see the ending,
And perhaps not even the very next step.

We've lost that sense of adventure
 because we have domesticated baptism
 To mean entry into an organization,
 The church...
 Rather than a rich and glorious invitation
 to a new and larger world.

Baptism immerses us in the fact
 That bidden or unbidden
 And sometimes when we least expect or perceive it
 God is present
 As the one who both loves us
 And proclaims us as the Beloved.

Some theologians think Jesus's baptism
 Was the moment at which God entered him,
 Or at the very least,
 When Christ became conscious
 of God's presence moving within Him.

When the baptismal water pours out on us,
 As it did on Christ,
 it touches us,
 it changes us
 and in some sense brings us
 divine life and light and presence.

This baptismal water is the extension of God into our own lives...
 When we see and feel and touch as well as hear,

**"You are my beloved Son,
 My precious daughter,
 My favored child.
 I am happy with you
 I want to go on an adventure with you."**

That voice comes to us,
 The presence enfolds and surrounds us
 Throughout our lives
 almost physically at times
 when we least expect it
 But need it most.

When we are rejoicing over good news
 Bidden or unbidden
 God is present.

When our hearts are so heavy or in pain

That we can barely stand
 Bidden or unbidden
 God is present.

In our parents arms
 where our whole little hands curl around our parents finger
 Bidden or unbidden,
 God is present.

When we draw our dying breath,
 And someone pulls a sheet over our head
 Bidden or unbidden
 God is present.

Throughout this adventure called life
 Bidden or unbidden
 God is present
 And asks us to be fully present
 To god and to everyone else also.

Our own baptismal identity as beloved community-
 Beloved sons and daughters of God
 Calls us to love each other
 And all people.

What greater adventure could there be
 Than fulfilling the last two of our baptismal promises
 We will renew today?

Celebrant: Will you seek and serve
 Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor
 as yourself?

People: I will, with God's help.

Celebrant: Will you strive for justice and peace among
 all people, and respect the dignity of every
 human being?

People: I will, with God's help.

This is our baptismal truth
 This is what we believe.

This is how God comes to us.

Amen.

Prayer at close of service:

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures
of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths as yet untrodden,
through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with courage,
not knowing where we go,
but only that your hand is leading us
and your love supporting us,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.