

**Sunday January 3, 2021 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church**

**Bible Study – Mark 1:4-11  
“Tearing the Heavens Apart”**

Open with a word of prayer

**Gathering Time** (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, discuss the following: “What is your first memory?”

**Mark 1:4-11 Context:** This week’s reading, an account of the ministry of John the baptizer and the baptism of Jesus, is the beginning of Mark’s gospel. It establishes several points: that John was the “forerunner” of Jesus, announcing his coming; that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit; and that only Jesus saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove, and heard the voice of God proclaim him God’s beloved Son – a proclamation that echoed that of a King (Psalm 2) as well as a Servant (Isaiah 42).

**Read Mark 1:4-11**

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

**Read Mark 1:4-11 again**

**Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.**

- As a group, read the baptismal questions found in *The United Methodist Hymnal* or [online](#). (Look specifically at sections 4-8.)
- What do you remember about your baptism? Who was there? Where were you? Do you remember why you were baptized?
- What does it mean to you that you are one of the baptized?
- What does it mean to you that you are part of the baptized community? As a part of the family of God how are you supporting others and showing others the way to life?
- How is our baptism a symbolic way of tearing apart from our old ways and an invitation into a new way of being?

- How is baptism a beginning landmark in our journey of discipleship? [Hint: We are claimed by God, become part of the church family, and now live in freedom to trust in God's grace.]
- How might you become more conscious of your identity as one of the baptized? [One idea: your shower or bath could be a visual reminder of your baptism.]

### **Closing Reflection Question**

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

**Prayer** (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

**Sending Forth** (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

God who encounters us right where we are, we give you thanks for claiming us as your own. We are thankful that we belong to a family that stretches across geographic borders and even across time. Empower us to live as the baptized in all we do and all we say to everyone we meet this week. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

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.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.