

**Sunday, January 8, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
New Year’s Day**

**Bible Study
Matthew 3:13-17
“The Water’s Fine: Glimpses of the Kin-dom”**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes)

In pairs or groups of three, have each participant respond to the following: “Share what you remember of your baptism. Who was there? Who was the pastor? What did you think baptism meant for your life?”

Matthew 3:13-17, Context. In Matthew’s Gospel, we move quickly from the resettlement of the holy family to Nazareth, to the preaching of John the Baptist, to this week’s reading that tells of the baptism of Jesus by John. Matthew uses the narrative that he found in Mark’s Gospel but adds the exchange between John and Jesus: recognizing that Jesus is the one he has been preaching about, John holds back when Jesus comes forward to be baptized. But Jesus insists, in order “to fulfill all righteousness.” This humility on Jesus’ part is in keeping with Matthew’s portrait of Jesus as the servant of Isaiah 42. Jesus is both the Son, as well as the obedient Servant of God.

Read 3:13-17

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 3:13-17 again

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

- Why do you think John the Baptist tried to deter Jesus from being baptized (v. 14)?
- What happened after Jesus’ baptism? Why might this be significant? [We hear similar words from God in Matthew 17:5. Though this all appeared to be one event, there seemed to have been two separate actions.

- What might it mean that Jesus' baptism by John would "fulfill all righteousness"? [Throughout Matthew, we read of fulfilling the prophets or Scripture. Here, Matthew speaks of Jesus' baptism fulfilling righteousness. This would highlight Jesus' role as a king who performs his task righteously (Wisdom of Solomon 1:1-2).]
- If you participated in a Remembrance of Baptism service (or Wesley Covenant Service), discuss your reflections about any insights you received. Talk about how baptism serves as the foundation for discipleship.
- If Jesus was without sin, why do you think he was baptized?
- In this coming year, how might we learn to live out our baptismal promises anew? [See page 34 of the *United Methodist Hymnal*: "repent of sin...accept the freedom and power God gives you...put your whole trust in his grace..."]

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). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

Faithful God, thank you for sending your Son Jesus Christ, who has identified with us, and for the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to be part of the ministry of the redemption of the world. May we live as the baptized people of God in all we do and say. **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.