

Sermon for 9 January 2022 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore  
Baptism of the Lord

Scriptures: Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 29(UM761); Acts 8:14-17; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

***“One of us”***

An article in the venerable “Christian Century” magazine articulates what I was thinking when I chose my sermon title for today: “One of us.”

Written by a graduate student in theology @ The University of Chicago, it is part of the Veritas Forum, “an organization that invites speakers from different perspectives and worldviews to dialogue around life’s biggest questions.” It is an interview with theologian Willie Jennings, a Black professor who teaches systematic theology and African Studies at Yale Divinity School. His most recent book is “After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging.” The title of the interview is “The geography of Whiteness.”

I think I’ll be more useful to you by breaking the usual pattern of my sermons here and skipping around in the article to quote some sentences I underlined as I first read it, and then read it again, and then again.

*(pause for reading and commenting)*

The connection I’m making with this Sunday when we focus on Jesus’ baptism is how powerful it is to look at Jesus as one of us; not above us or separated from us, but literally one among many, as we say on our coins, ‘e pluribus unum.’

What is spectacular this year is the relevance of that vision, as everything is globally awash and adrift, and as we specifically in America are confronting our concept of race as it affects everything.

What I pray is that we will hear the call to speak and think, and most of all to pray, over this issue as we renew our vows of baptism, as we re-evaluate our attitudes towards one another, and as we go towards what is now legally part of our calendar, Black History Month.

Thanks be to God for this moment of trial and trauma. Teach us to learn kindness afresh, to watch for fresh insights on our upbringing and our present location among our fellow human beings, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.