

"Chaos Overcome"  
Genesis 1:1-5

January 7, 2018

The Baptism of Our Lord

"Stop the world! I want to get off!" Have you ever wanted to say that? Have you ever said it? This is the reaction many of us have when we encounter a major roadblock or a series of minor, but particularly frustrating, difficulties in our lives. You know that feeling when life gets so chaotic. Something out of your control happens and, when it does, it throws a monkey wrench into your life and your plans for it.

As a congregational family here, we've experienced that chaos and frustration recently. We have endured three deaths in our church family here at Peace in the span of about a week during the busiest time of the year – Christmas.. We had to deal with bitterly cold weather and its effect in canceling on our special service plan for New Year's Eve. There has been hurt, sorrow, pain and pressure for the family members of the deceased, for members of the congregation, and for your pastor.

I'm sure many of you encountered roadblocks, felt frustration, and experienced difficulties in your personal lives as well. It may be a sickness which ruined your holiday season. It may be a financial crunch in your life that causes worry and uncertainty. It may be the crash of a computer, the breakdown of a car, or any other of our wonderful modern-day devices going down. Pastors and their families are not immune from this. In the beginning of December, my car was likely totaled in an accident. Last week, our stove died. Suddenly, we have 2 huge financial ticket items to pay for. That alone causes great stress and pressure on the family budget. Life can be very very chaotic.

Nobody likes chaos. We can't thrive when we are being bombarded by annoyances, worries, or frustrations. We can't live happy and fulfilling lives when we are experiencing one problem after another. We may not be able to function when we have to face pressures, conflicts, and difficulties.

But that is the nature of life, as we know it and have experienced it. We would like life to be perfectly arranged and functioning flawlessly, but that just doesn't happen. The more we try to make life that way and remove the chaos, the more chaotic life seems to get. It is like the line from a John Lennon song which says, "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans." Life can be very chaotic and life cannot exist in chaos.

In our text for today, we see this truth. Moses takes us back to the beginning and even before. We get to peek behind the curtain of history and witness prehistory – before life existed, before the fall into sin, before the rat race of modern life, before computers crashed, cars were crashed, and appliances broke down. When we think of the book of Genesis, we may first think of the Garden of Eden, of Paradise and perfection, but here at the very beginning – at the time when there was no time; when there is God and only God – we find chaos. There is one thing that is very clear – life did not and would not exist in the middle of this chaos.. Life cannot take place in the void of nothingness and, at this point in the text, as the Spirit of the Lord hovers over the waters, chaos reigns.

What is this formless void? This dark nothingness? The Hebrew used here is difficult to understand. We know it is not evil; there is no sin yet. But whatever it means, one thing is clear: life cannot exist where chaos reigns. It is like trying to build a house on a sink hole. It just doesn't work. There is nothing solid on which to build. For life to take place, chaos must be subdued and over.

We know this all too well. God created the world by the power of His Word. He declared it to be very good because everything was calm and cooperative. There was order, not chaos. However, chaos soon came roaring back in the form of a seductive serpent and a bite of forbidden fruit. Now, that was evil and it caused great chaos to ensue. Humanity was cut off from their Creator and they were cut off from one another. Because of the Fall into Sin, all of Adam and Eve's children right down to you and me are caught up in a world doing its best to tear itself apart. That is chaos. That is evil.

The chaos started badly enough. For farmers, it meant thorns, thistles, and the sweat of your brow to make your daily bread. For women, it meant pain in childbirth. Those are bad enough. For all, it meant death. These are the wages of sin, as well as the effects of sin. This was chaos.

You know how it's gone since then. You and I feel this chaos every day. Chaos stalks us like a wild animal hunts prey. We sense the void of chaos when the job is lost and the bills increase. We may feel the nothingness of chaos trying to swallow us up at the hospital or at the funeral home. Chaos shows itself in addictions, depressions, and other mental diseases. The chaos confronts us as Christians when we experience persecution for the faith we confess and when ungodly social agendas are forced down our cultural throats as being good and progressive: abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage, and all sorts of other perversions of God's gift of sex. The void, the sense of nothingness, and the chaos itself all seek to devour us like a roaring lion.

Now it's true that we bring about some of these chaotic events by our own sinful living. Sometimes these things are done to us by others. It is not as if every time a computer locks up or an appliance fails to work or something else bad happens does it mean that each is caused by a particular sin. But in every case, the root problem for all of this is that sin – Adam's sin, Eve's sin, my sin your sin, the world's sin – which has separated all of us from God, and thoroughly corrupted His perfect creation. In other words, it's chaos

For life to exist, the chaos in this world and in our lives must be overcome. Order must be restored. The enemies of sin, Satan, and death must be broken for us, for we have no strength of our own and this cosmic job is far too big.

You and I look at the chaos in our lives and in the world and the best we can come up with is to say, "Stop the world! I want to get off!" The Spirit of God, however, hovers over the water and the void and says, "Let there be." Out of the chaos mentioned in our text, the Lord restored order. He spoke things into existence. "Let there be light," He said, and there was light. With His powerful Word, chaos is broken. Order is brought into being. When He finished creating the heavens and the earth, He looked at all that He had made and, behold, it was good. And all of this happened, not

because God had to do it, but because of His limitless love. God our Father created life out of nothing. When chaos is broken, life is a result. In the void, in the black hole, in the chaos, life cannot abide, but with the Word of God there is life and more life.

When the chaos of evil threatened to overtake His children, His creation, or His Church, it is the Lord's Living Word that brings order, peace, and salvation. His Word created the world and everything in it. And His Word, made flesh and blood in Jesus Christ, re-created you and me to save us from sin, death, and the devil. That incarnate Word came to the world in Bethlehem's manger and today He stands in the Jordan River with John. Here the mighty Son of God stands with lowly sinners in the disorder and chaos of our sin. My sins, your sins, in the sins of the world were poured on His head as Jesus is baptized. The Father who called light good now praises the Light of the world and proclaims an eternal "very good" of Jesus when He says, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

This is the beginning of Jesus' ministry to re-create each of us out of the chaos and save us from the void. As unusual as the beginning of Jesus' ministry to do this was, even more unusual would be the climax of His ministry. Unlike the power of the Word in restoring order out of chaos and light out of darkness in the physical creation, it would be the weakness of the Word made flesh shone forth in humility and service, in lowliness and suffering, and with the cross and nails and a spear thrust into His side. At the place called Golgotha – the Place of the Skull – Jesus re-creates a fallen world and rescues hell-bent sinners by dying their own death.

When the baptized Son of God spoke from the cross and powerfully proclaimed, "It is finished," the effect of these words is more profound than we even realize. His baptized, crucified flesh has redeemed our fallen, sinful flesh. By removing the sin that separated us from God, Jesus' death has reconciled us to Him, restored our relationship with the One who brings order where there was chaos, perfection where there was sin, fulfillment where there was an empty void, and Paradise where there was nothingness. Jesus' perfect life has become our perfect life through Holy Baptism which we have shared. His beauty re-creates our ugliness and makes us beautiful in the eyes of our Heavenly Father, who now says to us as He said to Jesus, "You are my beloved son/daughter; with you I am well pleased."

Beloved in Christ, chaos is not your life; the void is not your fate; and nothingness is not your destination. The chaos of sin, death, and devil and all that they cause now has no power over you. God has created us by His Word and has re-created us in the Word become flesh, Jesus Christ, our Lord. The Spirit of God hovered over the waters at the moment of the creation of the universe. The Spirit of God descended upon Jesus at the waters of the Jordan River in His baptism. The Spirit of God hovered over the waters of Holy Baptism and descended upon you in your baptism, washing you and re-creating you in that baptism. Today, we thank God that our baptized, crucified, and resurrected Lord Jesus has broken the power of chaos and death and brings us into life in His kingdom for. Amen