

The Rev. Jay Lawlor "Baptism of our Lord" sermon for January 7, 2018 Church of the Nativity, Indianapolis, IN

The Rev. Jay Lawlor was visiting priest at Church of the Nativity (Episcopal), Indianapolis, IN on Jan. 7, 2018 and preached on the Baptism of Jesus.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, US, March 1, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Rev. Jay Lawlor](#) preached a [sermon](#) titled the "Baptism of our Lord" as visiting priest at Church of the Nativity (Episcopal) in Indianapolis, Indiana on January 7, 2018. The Gospel reading was Mark 1:4-11.



Baptism of Christ by Dave Zelenka. Creative Commons License.

This First Sunday after the Epiphany we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord. We are in Year B of the Lectionary cycle, so we have Mark's account of Jesus' baptism. John goes to the Jordan River to prepare the way for Jesus. Mark writes of John:

He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:7-8, NRSV)

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The Rev. Jay Lawlor

Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit – the very breath of God – to empower his movement of love, liberation, and life. But first Jesus comes to be baptized by John. So what are we to make of Jesus' baptism? Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, Dean, President and Professor of New Testament at Seminary of the

Southwest – an Episcopal seminary in Austin, Texas, offers this helpful commentary:

One of the undisputed facts in historical Jesus research is the baptism of Jesus by John. For Jesus to have been baptized by John suggests that he was a follower of John or a participant in the movement of John for which baptism in water for repentance was the ritual/prophetic sign. All four gospels explain in different ways how Jesus could have been baptized by John and yet be greater. Mark here implies identification with John as the messenger and one who cries out in the wilderness. Historically, Jesus' baptism was not Christian baptism. Jesus' "sinlessness" is not an issue for Mark. (Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, Working Preacher Commentary on Mark 1:4-11 for Jan. 7, 2018)

Jesus' baptism is not the same as our baptisms. Historically Jesus joined John's movement for a time.

Likely a matter of practicality. John already had a large following and his mission was to ready them to follow Jesus. Jesus would then gather his own following to take the movement to whole other level. John is perfectly clear in the gospel accounts of his role in relation to Jesus.

How then should we understand Jesus' baptism beyond his participating in John's movement as a way to ready his own? Simply stating that Jesus was baptized as an inauguration of his public ministry does not do justice to the scriptural witness of Mark's gospel account. There is much more going on. Jesus' baptism was, in its own right, an epiphany: God's revealing of Jesus' nature and identity. [...]

The complete transcript of the Rev. Jay Lawlor's sermon is available at <https://www.therevjaylawlor.com/baptism-lord-sermon-rev-jay-lawlor-year-b-jan-7-2018/> as well as on Church of the Nativity's website.

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