

Can you imagine the scene? Can you imagine standing in line, in the wilderness, with the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem. Basically, everyone you've heard of and everyone you've never heard of all in line for John's baptism.

There are people like you, but also people "above" or "below" you: there are celebrities and movie stars and powerful ones in line, and there are also powerless ones in line: migrant workers, homeless vets, small children. But here, in this line by the River Jordan, what separates people is less important than what has brought them together: they all come seeking baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; they all desire the transformation and release that comes from the water.

Suddenly, a clamor rushes over the crowd. Something is happening in the river...or over the river...Descriptions of the sight begin to pass down the line...Just as he was coming up out of the water...*the heavens tore apart!* and the Spirit descended on him *like a dove*. Then someone says it happened while John was baptizing Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee That's when you hear it: The Voice from Heaven, clear as the noonday sun: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee is...God's Son? But wasn't he just standing...in this line? Wasn't he just waiting for baptism...like the rest of us? Why would God's Son be in line...with us...for baptism?

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Here we arrive at one of the great theological questions of the church:

Why did Jesus get baptized? Why did Jesus undergo John's baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins? He didn't need to. According to church teaching, Christ had no sins of which to repent; Jesus was the forgiveness and repentance.

So why did Jesus choose to undergo John's baptism? The answer is to identify with us. To be one of us. "It was [out of] his insatiable love for human beings like you and me," one pastor puts it, "that he submitted to John's baptism." Jesus goes out of his way to wait in John's line to show that he was truly human. Because in getting baptized, Jesus shares the human experience with us, identifying with us in our sin, relating to our brokenness, standing in solidarity with all of humanity.

Shared experience. Identifying with and relating to. Standing in solidarity. In his baptism, Jesus, the Son of God, says, in a phrase, "Me Too" to humanity. By his baptism Jesus, truly God, says, "I'm *also* truly human."

Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, you could say, is God's "Me Too."

Because in Jesus, God says, "Me too" not only to the joys and riches of human life but also to our pain and suffering. In Jesus, God lives a life that literally feels our grief and fundamentally shares our sorrows. In Jesus, God even says, "Me too" to our mortality and death, choosing not only to live but also to die, doing one of the very things that makes us human.

Jesus is God's "Me Too." And from one of the main news stories and social movements from 2017, we know how powerful that saying can be. For the

brave women and men, people from all walks of life, who called out the pernicious sin of sexual harassment and assault have shown us just what an impact that naming shared experience and showing solidarity and saying, “Me too” can have.

In its Person of the Year article about the #MeToo movement, Time Magazine wrote, “When a movie star says, ‘#MeToo,’ it becomes easier to believe the cook who’s been quietly enduring for years.” Having created “an umbrella of solidarity” the #MeToo social movement has had “immediate and shocking results...CEO’s have been fired, moguls toppled, icons disgraced.”

God saying “Me Too” to humanity has similar effects: Knowing Jesus, it becomes easier to believe that we are--all of us--are truly and utterly, loved by God and forgiven our sins.

And when God shows solidarity with human suffering, it also upsets the powerful and upends the status quo. Just listen to the Virgin Mary, who, when finding out that she, a lowly girl, would bear God’s Son here on earth, sang about how the Mighty One “has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts,” and how in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God “has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.”

Yes, saying “#MeToo” is a powerful thing, especially when it comes from God. For in Jesus, God’s cosmic MeToo, God shares our experience.

God identifies with us. And that solidarity is Good News today because it helps us believe in the radical, universal, unconditional love of God, upsets the systems of abuse and sin, power and domination that harm us and our world and promises us that we are never alone.

AMEN.

Quotes from *Time* magazine are from “The Silence Breakers,” December 18, 2017. Vol. 190, no. 25-27.

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Lutheran Church of Our Saviour
North Chesterfield, Virginia
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The Baptism of Our Lord
Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11