

**Gen. 1:1–5**  
**Ps. 29**  
**Acts 19:1–7**  
**Mark 1:4–11**

# This Is My Son

## Goal for the Session

*Children meet John the Baptist where he baptized Jesus and explore the meaning of baptism today.*

## ■ P R E P A R I N G F O R T H E S E S S I O N

### Focus on Mark 1:4–11

#### WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective,” Leslie J. Hoppe

Mark wishes his readers to know who Jesus really is from the very beginning of his story of Jesus’ ministry and death. The characters in Mark’s story will come to such knowledge only gradually. The climax of Mark’s Gospel comes with the confession of the centurion on Golgotha: “Truly, this man was God’s Son” (Mark 15:39). Ironically, it was the death of Jesus that revealed his true identity. The words spoken by the voice from the heavens identify Jesus as God’s “beloved Son” (Mark 1:11). The rest of the Gospel describes how this beloved Son fulfills the mission given to him by God—a mission that will result in his execution.

#### WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective,” Lee Barrett

Jesus’ baptism does more than initiate the beloved Son’s career of obedient suffering. A mysterious connection is implied between Jesus’ identity as the suffering, obedient Son and Jesus’ empowerment by the Spirit. This critical descent of the Spirit catalyzes Jesus’ potent public ministry with its exercise of power over demons, sin, the law, and even nature. Jesus did not receive the Spirit in order to enjoy privately its spiritual benefits, but rather in order to pass it on. The church has claimed that Jesus underwent baptism so that we might commune with him in baptism and share his empowerment by the Spirit. If our baptism involves a participation in Jesus’ baptism, and if Jesus’ baptism initiates his ministry of suffering obedience, then our baptism must include a similar acceptance of self-denial.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective,” Elton W. Brown

When John the baptizer testifies that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit, he is declaring what all of Mark’s Gospel declares: that the ministry of Jesus is the beginning of the eschatological reign of God. The Spirit that is the sign of the turning of the ages has now been poured forth on Jesus. From now on, he and those who follow him are blessed and stuck with an eschatological mission: to declare and embody God’s reign.

#### NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective,” Ted A. Smith

Baptism of the Lord Sunday can be a great day for congregations to celebrate the tearing open of the heavens. The coming stretch of Ordinary Time will carry us into the hard work of discipleship. But before Mark takes readers on that journey, the Gospel gives us a moment to taste and see and hear the goodness of the Lord. Today makes God’s love *manifest* in word, song, sacrament, and prayer. It is a day to wear white and shout hallelujah. The heavens have been torn open, and this is a day to bask in the love they reveal.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**  
**Mark 1:4–11**

## Focus on Your Teaching

If children were baptized as infants, they may not know much about that event or even if it took place. It is possible that some children have not been baptized. Think about how you will be welcoming to each child in your group, baptized or not. Jesus' baptism story provides an occasion to talk about baptism in the church today. Older children may recognize baptism as a symbol of their inclusion into the church, where they feel loved and accepted. All children can find acceptance from God in this story.

*God of living water, as I remember my baptism, grant me the grace to show your acceptance to everyone I meet. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- poster board
- markers
- white cloth
- Christ candle
- matches
- offering basket
- Bible
- Singing the Feast, 2020–2021*; CD player
- Resource Sheet 1
- Color Pack 11, 12, 29
- paper lunch bags

For Responding

- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2 on card stock, scissors, glue, white paper, hole punch, yarn, beads
- option 4: *Singing the Feast, 2020–2021*; CD player; Color Pack 29

## ■ LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, print the gathering litany on poster board to use until Lent. Make a sample paper bag puppet for Exploring. Place a bookmark at the Gospel of Mark in the worship table Bible. For option 1 in Responding, invite your pastor or another knowledgeable person about the practice of baptism in your congregation to talk about baptism with the class.

As the children arrive, ask them to set up the worship table, with the white cloth, Christ candle, offering basket, and Bible. When everything is ready, play “Jesus Bids Us Shine” (track 14 on *Singing the Feast, 2020–2021*). After the song, light the Christ candle and lead the children in this litany:

*Leader: God of light, we gather in your presence.*

**All: We want to walk in your light.**

*Leader: We gather to learn how to follow Jesus.*

**All: We will learn and follow. Amen.**

Receive the offering. Point to the white cloth and explain that this day is another special event in the life of Jesus. Extinguish the candle.

Show Color Pack 11. Ask:

- ❖ What are the people in this picture doing?
- ❖ When have you seen a baptism?
- ❖ Have you seen a baptism in our church?
- ❖ Do you know anything about your baptism?

Tell the group that today's Bible story is about Jesus' baptism, which was different from baptism today.

## EXPLORING

Ask a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table, open it to the bookmark, and read the name of the book. This is the third Gospel the group has studied: Luke, John, and now Mark. Explain that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus' life on earth. The story of Jesus' baptism is told in all four Gospels, which suggests that it is an important story. Tell the story on Resource Sheet 1 (Jesus Baptized). Ask:

- ❖ Who baptized Jesus?
- ❖ What did you learn about John the Baptizer in the story?
- ❖ Where was Jesus baptized?
- ❖ What special thing happened when Jesus was baptized?

Show Color Pack 12. Ask:

- ❖ How is this illustration like what you imagined Jesus' baptism to be?
- ❖ How is it different?



Read Mark 1:1 from the worship table Bible. Ask:

- ❖ What does Mark want readers to know about Jesus?



Make paper bag puppets of John the Baptizer and Jesus. Give each child a paper lunch bag and markers. Show the learners how to lay the bag on a table with the bottom flap facing them. Have them draw the top parts of the face (hair line, eyebrows, eyes, nose) on the top of the flap and an upper lip on the bottom edge of the top flap. Have them draw the rest of the mouth by opening the flap and drawing the lower lip on it. When they place their hand inside the puppet and place their fingers in the flap, the puppet mouth moves when they move their fingers. When the puppets are finished, have the learners find partners and tell the story of Jesus' baptism with their puppets. They can tell it twice, so each child plays the part of both men.

To conclude Exploring, invite the children to use their puppets to say one thing they like about the story or one thing they wonder about the story.

## RESPONDING

If possible, provide two options so children have a choice. Select one that is more challenging for children who are able to work on their own.

1. **Baptism Today** The children will learn about the sacrament of baptism as practiced today. If possible, take the group to the baptismal font for this conversation. Have your pastor tell the children how a baby is baptized, including the promises of the parents and the congregation. Pour water into the font so the children see it is ordinary tap water. Invite their questions about baptism. Encourage them to ask their parents about baptism, their own and the children's.

EASY  
PREP

2. **Doves** The children will make doves to hang in their rooms or to give to families when an infant is baptized. This will also provide an opportunity to talk about baptism at your church and to discover what the children know about it. Distribute card-stock copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Dove Pattern) and scissors so the children can cut out the doves. Follow the directions on the resource sheet. Have extra copies ready for the children to make doves to present to families when a child is baptized.
3. **Game** Baptism today affirms that all are loved by God, just as God said about Jesus when Jesus was baptized. This game emphasizes that idea. Set chairs, one for each child, in a large circle. Ask everyone to be seated. Ask for a volunteer to be “It” and stand in the middle of the circle. Remove the empty chair from the circle. “It” says, “God loves (*describe a characteristic, such as everyone with blue eyes or everyone who has a sister*).” Quickly, everyone who meets that criterion jumps up and takes another chair. At the same time, “It” tries to get a seat. The person left standing is the new “It.” If “It” says, “God loves everyone,” everyone must take a new seat, but not the chair on either side of her or him.
4. **Song** God’s Spirit came upon Jesus like a dove, according to the Gospels. That Spirit prepared Jesus for his work and ministry. Listen to “I’ve Got Spirit in My Hands” (Color Pack 29; track 13 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Ask the children to listen for where the Spirit is in each stanza. Talk together about how the Spirit could help them live God’s way if it were in their hands. Continue with each stanza. Listen to the first stanza; then sing the song together.

## CLOSING

As the children gather at the worship table, play “I’ve Got Spirit in My Hands” (Color Pack 29; track 13 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Light the Christ candle.

Invite the children to clap or sing along to “I’ve Got Spirit in My Hands.”

Pray:

*Loving God, we are happy to be called your children. Help us to live in your way. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

As each child leaves, say: “(Name), be glad that you are a child of God.”

## **Jesus Baptized** based on Mark 1:4-11

The Gospel of Mark, the shortest of the books in the Bible about Jesus, has no angels, no magi, no shepherds, and no story about the baby Jesus. The Gospel of Mark starts right off with Jesus as a grown man.

In the first chapter, we read the story of Jesus' baptism. This is how it is told in the Gospel of Mark.

The prophet Isaiah told the people,

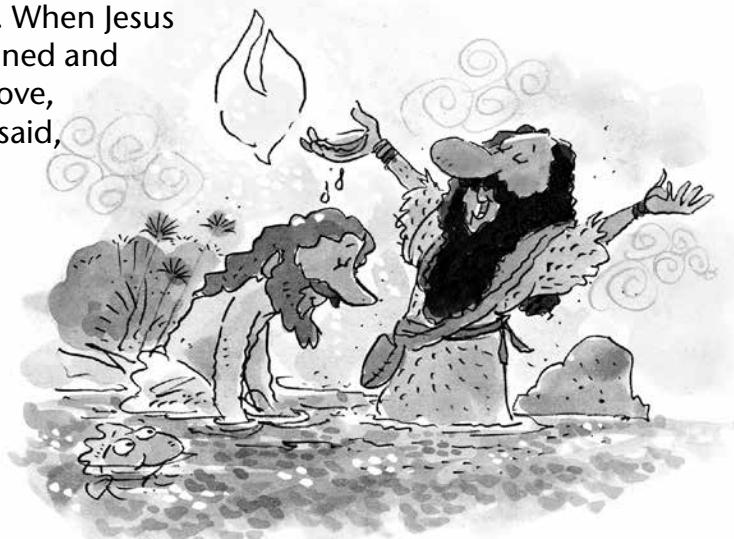
*God will send a messenger to get everything ready.  
This messenger will call out,  
“Prepare the way for God!”*

Many years later, John the Baptizer began preaching in the desert and baptizing people in the Jordan River.

This John wore skins for clothes, and he ate locusts and honey. This John said, “Get ready for someone who will be greater than me! I baptize you with water, but this one will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Many people came to the river where John preached. When people said they would change how they lived and live in God's way, John dipped them into the river so they were covered with water. This was how John baptized them.

One day, Jesus showed up and John baptized him, too, dipping him down under the water. When Jesus came up, the skies opened and the Holy Spirit, like a dove, came to Jesus. A voice said, “This is my Son. I love him very much, and I am pleased with him.”



## Dove Pattern

### Directions

1. Cut out the pieces.
2. Glue wings to either side of the dove's body. Make sure the words are facing out on the wing in front!
3. Punch a small hole at the base of the dove.
4. Insert a piece of yarn through the hole and tie a knot. Thread some beads onto the yarn and secure them with a knot. Trim off any excess yarn.
5. Make a hanging loop from yarn and glue between the wings.

