

An invitation to reflect . . .

The Baptism

■ by Erin Davis, MSW, LCSW

I was told and I listened. I followed, but it wasn't until this precise moment that I fully realize. I've spent myself waiting and hoping—believing that He would come. It feels like a lifetime that I have spent in this dry, cracked desert, seething with the toxicity of serpents slithering here and there: legalism and pride oozing from their exposed fangs. I've seen a glimpse every now and again of light breaking through the calloused surface of this town. But today, right here, it's like the sun is finally shining through...no clouds to interrupt its rays beaming down.

I see Him coming and I can't seem to tear my eyes away. It's as if I'm looking into the eyes of my oldest friend. Since that day our mothers met, my life has been connected to His. It's like coming home...only this home is so full of secret nooks and crannies that I will never grow weary of exploring it. There is so much mystery in those eyes, like the longer I gaze, the more I am consumed with wonder about the things I thought I knew.

While I have been preaching repentance, I understand now that my revelation has just been the first course; a mere appetizer, whetting the appetite for the true feast. As He draws closer to me, I can't help but declare to all who have ears and want to hear that this is the One we've been waiting for! I've been priming the pump in the desert for the only source of living water that can revive this land.

When he finally reaches me, I am simply undone—astonished at what He asks of me. Am I not just John, son of Zechariah? If this man, this wondrous man, is who I think He is, this request seems above and beyond me...and yet He asks me. I accept maybe out of pure curiosity or maybe raw desire. Something is gnawing at me, like there is a lot more to this request than meets my eye. This is no routine baptism.

And so I take Him in. We are up to our waists in the crisp, cool waters of the Jordan. The waters make way for Him, like a servant bowing to their master. He takes a hold of my hand and I am overtaken by the perfect paradox of peace meeting fire. I feel fully known in the most surprising way...not by a person, but by something profoundly *MORE*. Before I have a chance to wrap my head around the obscurity and wonder of



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my experience, He's immersing Himself in the water. It cascades around His frame as if it's welcoming Him in. He emerges quickly, not unlike the hundreds of others I have done this with. But then, something mind-blowing occurs.

I hear a voice—the one I've heard so many times in my thoughts—the one that whispers to me in the still desert nights—the one I came here for. He's telling me that this is His son and that He's pleased with this man, His son, my relation. I glance quickly at my surroundings and I see the same look of awe and perplexity on the faces of everyone observing. I'm not the only one who heard His voice...the voice of Yahweh.

There is a deep, rich, almost heaviness in the air...the good kind. I look at Him and His eyes are closed like He's drinking it in...His whole body is smiling...like He received the greatest gift of His life. There is the shimmer of a tear on His left cheek that nearly sparkles from the brightness of the sun beating down on Him.

And then I see something: this white, almost iridescent cloud-like presence. It has a form and yet it doesn't. It's descending on Him... with the gentleness of a dove, but there is also something wild and amazing about it. I can't make out really what or who it is, only that it is covering and clothing Him... like it's a part of Him.

I try to take it all in...this beautiful, indescribable, prodigious spectacle before my very eyes. I know now everything has changed. I will never be the same. He is here. He is with us. ■



Erin Davis is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and sees clients in our Oak Park, IL location.

This reflection is based on the following Bible passages: *Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23; John 1:29-34*



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This reflection came about from a desire to understand the humanity of the stories in the Bible. Often, I would read scripture looking for a promise of certainty to stand on, instead of as an invitation to reflect. When I see the humanity of the experiences of John or even of Jesus, the words take on new life and meaning. I begin to explore, question and discover more in myself and my experience with God. When I read these with clients, I use them as tools of exploration...to notice what God is eliciting in them. What do they feel in their bodies, or what word or phrase jumped out at them? ~ Erin Davis MSW LCSW

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