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January 13, 2008
Baptism of the Lord
Acts 10:34 – 43
Matthew 3: 13 – 17

“Baptized”

The Fallacy

Just \$19.95! For just 19.95 I can send you two tubes of Super Putty. Super Putty is an amazing wonder! With Super Putty you can hang anything big and heavy to the wall—your husband, your teenage kid....

And if you buy today, I'll throw in two more tubes! That's twice the amount of Super Putty. And if you call right now, I'll send you this Toe Nail Clipper FREE!

You get the Super Putty and the Toe Nail Clipper free if you call right now, and not only that but if you run out of Toe Nail Clipper blades, we will send you NEW blades FREE for LIFE.....So call right now!! And if you are not happy we will send you your money back. We will send you your money back!!

19.95: Isn't it Nirvanah?? If you listen to TV you get the impression that everything essential and wonderful for the Good Life can be purchased for 19.95 : Absorbie Cloths, Light weight Swivel Sweepers, Powered Mini Blind Dusters, Wall hooks, Wall Putty, Personal Grooming Shaver, Fine Leather Organize Everything Bags... you name it –its yours plus free gifts, plus whatever it takes to run these things free for life! And with absolutely no risk and besides that you get something additional for nothing.

No risk, nothing to lose: Total security. How happy you will be! The Good Life is yours for 19.95!! (Go to Block Two)

The Reality

I wonder how many people when their spouse has left them clutch their Powered Mini Blind Duster for the strength they need to go on?

I wonder how many Absorbie cloths the grief stricken use?

When the world is falling apart and fear grips the nation following an event such as 9/11 and we feel violated and powerless --how many people grab their Swivel Sweeper?

When a medical diagnosis unglues your world Super Putty can not put it back together again.

When aging adults are scammed by an unscrupulous investor and lose their life savings, a Fine Leather Organizer doesn't erase the pain or provide for the future.

When a person is suddenly out there in the job market over the age of 50 and no amount of previous experience on an excellent resume seems to count for anything because of age a Personal Grooming Shaver doesn't roll back the years or restore a sense of self-worth.

Now these are patently silly comparisons, aren't they? The point is, just when everything you think you could ever want in life is achieved, is in its place and well organized and you are ahead of the game—its amazing how life is falling apart and there's not much in the way of human will alone that can put it together again.

My wallet can't mend it. I can't turn the clock back. There is no thing I can possess that fills the holes left in my life because of my inability to control everything and everyone around me. Or because of my own fault and denial. (To Block Three Below)

God's Saving Plan

There is someone who makes sense of the world regardless of the senselessness of current circumstances.

Who is that? (Jesus!)

There is someone who can set us up right again when our personal life goes topsy turvey.

WHO IS THAT? (JESUS)

There is someone who can provide meaning to existence when the world slaps us down and our self-esteem is in shreds.

There is someone who can forgive our guilt, love us, restore us and show us a better way forward when our relationships fall apart.

There is someone who can use what we've bungled not only for our own betterment but for the mending of the lives of others.

ONCE MORE: WHO IS THAT? JESUS!

Yes, the gospel tells us: there is a man sent by God anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit. A man with whom God is well pleased. Sent by God for a Soul Purpose:

To restore us and all of creation to its original goodness. He is Jesus.

Baptism

Jesus comes and enters in to our reality—he comes down to the river Jordan and stands with us in the big muddy of our messed up existence.

He commits his life for our life! He goes through the waters of death that we might be reborn to new life, eternal life lived in and through God's will for all time and eternity. Giving us a power that permits us to rise above circumstance, time and adversity.

He invites us to put him on like a special pair of glasses. When we put on Christ we see life true—

---we can turn away from the silly and nonsensical pursuits of the superficial—to recognize and confess our bondage to these powers and turn toward the truth.

We can say "No more!" And find our freedom and our life in commitment to God—just as we are and be freed by grace.

We affirm this through the waters of Baptism—God's touch of divine grace confirmed—a gentle warm hug of welcome, acceptance and affirmation that is also the amazing power that birthed the universe and each one of us into existence.

Through Baptism we die to our old selves and rise to new life. We wash away the clammy, sticky, icky contamination of the old pollution of

our minds, hearts and souls—and rise up refreshed, renewed, reborn. Scrubbed squeaky clean.

Once no one. Now God's Chosen Ones. Apart of God's Chosen People. IN but not OF the world. Called to join God in the work of making new life.

Turn in your hymnals to page 50.

Go down to the Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith.

There are three I do's and one I will. Read through these.

These vows make it clear:

We are saved for a purpose.

That purpose is to reject and resist evil in all forms, including our OWN sin.

That purpose is to accept responsibility and the power God gives us to overcome all forms of evil and injustice.

That purpose is to confess Jesus Christ as our Savior and to be in solidarity with all of God's people all over the world.

That purpose is to be a faithful disciple in service through our local church community.

These vows are followed by an ancient confession of faith which asks us: Do we believe in God? Do we believe in Jesus Christ? Do we believe in the Holy Spirit?

Our purpose in this confession of faith is to affirm continuity of truth and experience with the Universal Church down through the ages of who God is.

Baptism makes us one: One with Christ, One with each other and One with all the world God is saving.

Let the people say: **Amen.**