

what r u up 2?
“UP from the Depths”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden
for First UMC, Grand Junction, Sunday, Feb. 18, 2024

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ website or by clicking this link and finding the date of the worship service in which it appears:

<https://www.christianworldmedia.com/wordstream/fumcgj/search>

Scripture Text: Mark 1:9-15 [NRSV]

OPENING

- Speak to the Choir’s anthem, “Rise UP! Rejoice!” AND to the metaphor of the hot air balloons and the worship series *what r u up 2?*

Also, the invitation to not be distracted by trying to accomplish BIG THINGS in Lent but, in humility, to allow little things to symbolize the kingdom of God drawing near, much like Jesus’ use of the mustard seed and its growth to represent the kingdom of God in His teaching.

OPENING ILLUSTR.:

(*UP from the Depths...my first experience with full immersion baptism in the Animas River in Durango: the cycling into the depths and coming UP.*)

TO THE SCRIPTURES

An exploration in pix of the two baptismal sites along the Jordan from our journeys.

- The traditional site of Jesus’ baptism is Qasr al-Yahud.



Qasr al-Yahud: Traditional Site of Jesus’ Baptism looking across to “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (John 1:28)

- The modern-day site for pilgrims is the safer and more populous Yardenit Baptismal Site.



Yardenit Baptismal Site
for Christian (and other) Pilgrims to Israel

SERMON THOUGHTS

The cycling of:

- Jesus' descending into the depths of the waters of baptism and coming UP
- Followed by His descending into the depths of isolation in the desert and His coming UP and being waited on by angels.

Two Important Questions to Explore

1. Can you see in your life a similar pattern of descending into the depths, followed by being lifted UP by the Spirit of God?
2. As Jesus heard, "You are my beloved", can we hear the same thing? Not based on our having the same nature as Him nor by any measure of "good" behavior, but based simply on our being the objects of Divine Love as He was? This is enough to pull us UP from the depths of anything we are facing. 🎵 "Your Raise Me Up" REPRISE

CONCLUSION

Jesus' first message, according to the Gospel of Mark, occurs sometime after His baptism and temptation in the Judean wilderness: "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.*" It's a simple message, not grandiose in its scope or a call to action, nor is it a condemnation of the occupying Roman powers or its Jewish collaborators.

It is simply, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.*"

This Lenten worship series frees us from expectations of having to accomplish big things over the next six-to-seven weeks for it to have meaning and significance for us. Instead, it asks us to consider how the little things we do this season can make a BIG difference.

🎵 REPRISE "Your Raise Me Up" Chorus

Finally, let me ask you this morning and into the week beyond to think deeply about what Jesus may have meant by "the kingdom of God". What is that about? What are the values by which we would recognize it? Where do our values align with or cut against the grain of that? What did Jesus mean by this?

It's an important reality to ponder for many reasons, not the least of which is that its "coming near" is at the heart of the "Good News" Jesus calls us to believe in.

BENEDICTION

As we were discussing in Adult Confirmation last week, we can do a "Remember your baptism and be thankful" ceremony... (*Get a bowl of water and scattering device together before the service. Be sure to get some of the Jordan River water for this!*)