

From resolutions to promises (Matthew 3:13-17)

Jesus' baptism didn't end with him.

by [Christine Chakoian](#)

January 9, 2026

To receive these posts by email each Monday, [sign up](#).

For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.

In the Presbyterian Church I went to as a child, we never celebrated Baptism of the Lord Sunday. Honestly, I never thought much about Jesus' baptism until I went to seminary. But in recent years, it's become an anchor in my churches' life.

Instead of New Year's resolutions—so often about losing weight or saving money or spending less time in front of a screen—now we renew our baptismal vows. We tell the story from scripture: how Jesus sought out John to baptize him, though he had nothing to atone for. How Jesus pressed John to do so, not for the sake of purity or show but “to fulfill all righteousness.” How the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit descending like a dove on him. How Jesus heard the voice of God proclaim, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

Then we recommit ourselves to our own baptism promises. We swear to “trust in the gracious mercy of God,” “turn from the ways of sin,” and “renounce evil and its power in the world.” We proclaim “Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.” And we vow “to be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his word and showing his love,” trusting in God's help.

But it doesn't end there. Everyone in worship is asked to consider their personal calling—what God most desires for and from them. Then, just as we do on Ash Wednesday, they are invited forward to receive a sign of the cross on their forehead—but on this day, instead of the darkness of ashes, they are blessed with the water of the baptismal font. They are called by name and told, “Remember who you are. You are God's beloved child.”

Jesus' baptism didn't end with him. It was only the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise to the world—a promise we are called to carry on in his name.