

Interactive lesson



picture cropped from <https://twitter.com/jeffamy/status/1347167865884041223/photo/1>

Anyone recognize this scene? <Let them respond>

How did seeing this event make you feel?

<Let them respond>

A lot of people were terrified to see this going on in the US Capitol building. Why do you think that was? <Let them respond>

For some, it was an attack on the foundations of the US democracy. What do you think should be done as a follow up to this? <Let them respond>

Some people talk about a pendulum swinging back and forth between extremes. We have seen it in biblical stories many times, that when people turn further and further from God, eventually the ramifications of those choices are allowed to be felt by the people.

Does God completely abandon the people to their earned fate? <Let them respond>

Again and again, our God not only forgives, but uses those times to help people turn back to the good. I do not condone violence. Yet from the responses to it that I have seen, I think God will use this tearing apart of our democratic process to help the nation heal into something new.

What do you think we as Christians could do to facilitate this? <Let them respond>

Let us look forward to new beginnings, guided by the Holy Spirit, whenever the familiar is torn apart.

<Hymn "Baptized in Water" TFWS #2248>

Gospel lesson

This story talks about what a societal rebel did for the kickoff of Jesus's ministry. Listen to what they tore apart and consider what came of it.



picture from <https://www.facebook.com/fanninumc/photos/2553108331453193>

Mark 1:4-11 (NRSV)

⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

⁵ And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and

wild honey.

⁷ He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.

⁸ I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

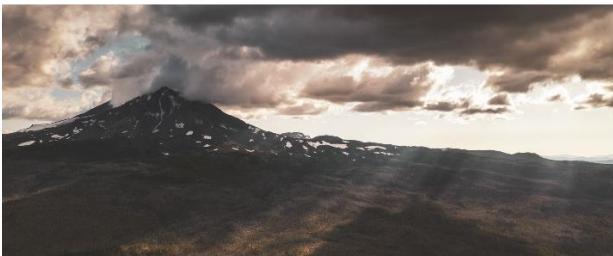
⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.

¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

The word of God for the people of God

Message: Tearing Apart the Heavens



Tearing Apart the Heavens

FOLLOW ME WORSHIP SERIES

picture adapted from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/follow-me/epiphany-baptism-of-the-lord-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/epiphany-baptism-of-the-lord-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Disruptor of our placid norms, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,

- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,
that we may accept Your new ways for us and always
follow You. Amen.



Follow Me!



- ♥ January 10 – Tearing Apart the Heavens
- ♥ January 17 – Anything Good
- ♥ January 24 – Follow Me
- ♥ January 31 – What Have You to Do with Us?
- ♥ February 7 – She Began to Serve
- ♥ February 14 – But Only Jesus

“Follow Me!” is the new worship series, beginning with “Tearing Apart the Heavens.” As summarized:

“Worship should be a celebration; this is the beginning of a new year. We survived 2020, and while there might still be lingering effects of the pandemic and the unrest, it is time to embrace a new possibility, a new hope.

The heavens have been torn open. But this isn’t a threat; it’s a promise of something new, something better. Let us commit ourselves to a closer walk with Christ. Let the waters of baptism renew us and cleanse us for our mission and ministry as followers of Jesus.”



picture screencaptured from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=TnCiYr8_FgA

God created, and it was good. We heard that in the reading from Genesis today, starting with light. But we see that not everything in the world is good today. I start to ask, "What happened?"...and then I remember the story of the fall into sin, and how it has flourished in the world along with humanity.

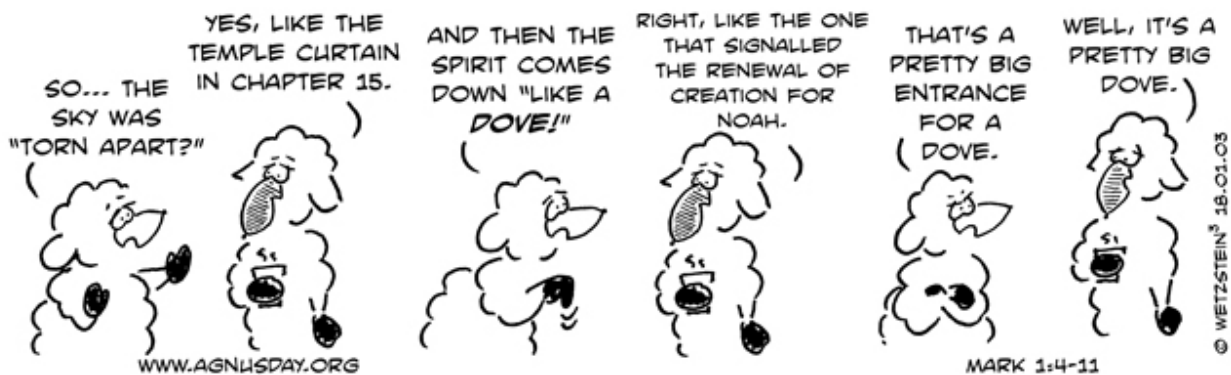
I note that without darkness of night, we would not understand the brightness of the light of day. Without experiencing sin, we could not understand how truly good and wonderful God is.

The psalm today is all about the power and glory of our Lord. With just His voice, God moves the unmovable, shaking things up, and His people worship before the Ruler of all.

It was this Almighty God that reached out to us wayward sinners, not in an overwhelming and destructive way. Instead, He chose to come to earth as Jesus, born as is natural for humans. He came so gently that when He reached adulthood, almost no one knew Him for who He really was.

Jesus, though sinless, underwent the ritual to have sins washed away at the start of His ministry. It represented His willingness to bear the burden of our sins so that we could be redeemed. So God let the people know who Jesus truly is, by speaking at His baptism.

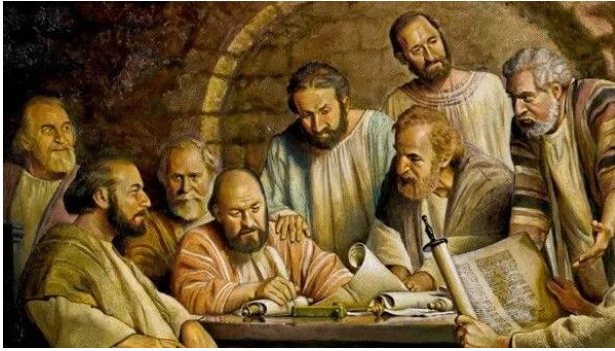
Remember what the psalmist said happens with God's voice? In this case instead of trees being destroyed, the heavens were torn apart!



<https://www.agnusday.org/comics/803/mark-01-4-11-2017>

It was also a transition from Jesus being covered with water to being covered by the Holy Spirit – something entirely new and different for people to get baptized in!

Do you remember your baptism? Do you remember accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior? Do you know the touch of the Holy Spirit in your life? That is the precious gift Jesus brought to us, direct reconnection with God.



picture from <https://scpeanutgallery.com/2016/07/13/daily-reading-13-july-the-travels-of-paul-the-council-at-jerusalem-acts-151-41/>

In the early days of the church, there was a devout Jew named Apollos who had been instructed in the Way of the Lord, but only up to the kind of baptisms that John had been doing for the people. Originally from Alexandria, he spoke in the synagogues of Ephesus to tell others of the Way.

Paul came to Ephesus with a couple of helpers. Those helpers, on hearing the partial message being preached, pulled Apollos aside and told him about Jesus. After learning of the Messiah, Apollos became a powerful witness for Jesus; he went to Achaia, leaving behind disciples of the Way in Ephesus.

Paul found some of those disciples. Knowing that Apollos had only recently learned about Jesus, Paul wanted to make sure they too understood the full truth. He asked those disciples if they had received the Holy Spirit when they became believers.

Did it matter, if they were serving the one true God, if they had received the Holy Spirit? Yes, absolutely! Jesus had transformed the faith from one

of rituals meant to appease an abstract God to a personal relationship with the Almighty. That was what receiving the Holy Spirit was all about.

It tore apart the traditional, ritual-based worship of God. It left those [who had not received the Spirit, yet were accustomed to the comfort of the rituals] floundering in fear at the change. But rather than convicting them, it invited them into a newer, much deeper kind of faith.

Can we see parallels to this today? Of course.



We already spoke about the politics in this country, current chaos that can evolve into something much better if we allow God to drive it.

I have spoken on numerous occasions about how the pandemic has been affecting our church, especially as we have not been meeting in person for our traditional worship rituals. Our whole approach to church has been torn open because we cannot congregate in the formal sanctuary.

How have we responded in faith? With coordinated crafting and donations of masks and other items by individuals for those who need them; with special considerations for how we operate the Sunshine Shop; with expanded food pantry hours for more people in need to be served; with intentional outreach calls to others in our congregation and community; with deliveries to those who we know to be more isolated; with expanded use of technology to safely connect from a distance; and the list goes on and on.

We survived 2020, and while there might still be lingering effects of the pandemic and the unrest, it is time to embrace a new possibility, a new hope. The heavens have been torn open. But this isn't a threat; it's a promise of something new, something better.

We are God's children. Let us commit ourselves to a closer walk with Christ. As the waters of the Jordan cleansed Jesus for His ministry to begin, let the baptism of the Holy Spirit renew us and cleanse us for our mission and ministry as followers of Jesus.

Now let us respond with

A Statement of Faith of the Korean Methodist Church

UMH #884

We believe in the one God,
creator and sustainer of all things,
Father of all nations,
the source of all goodness and beauty,
all truth and love.

We believe in Jesus Christ,
God manifest in the flesh,
our teacher, example, and Redeemer,
the Savior of the world.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
God present with us for guidance, for comfort,
and for strength.

We believe in the forgiveness of sins,
in the life of love and prayer,
and in grace equal to every need.

We believe in the Word of God
contained in the Old and New Testaments
as the sufficient rule both of faith and of
practice.

We believe in the Church,
those who are united in the living Lord
for the purpose of worship and service.

We believe in the reign of God
as the divine will realized in human society,
and in the family of God,
where we are all brothers and sisters.

We believe in the final triumph of righteousness,
and in the life everlasting. Amen.

<Doxology UMH #95>

<Prayer of Dedication and Pastoral Prayer>

Let us pray:

God of new seasons, new life, and new mercies, we take in the new with you. We trust you as you do new things. We look forward to the new hearts, the new lives that will see you, and a world where you'll make all things new.

You hold our world in your hands and spin it on its axis every day with a new sunrise and a new sunset. God, you are the same yesterday, today, and forevermore, and you have a tradition of doing new things to and in us. We offer ourselves to you, again, this year. Take us into the new with you. We also ask for Your help and wisdom as we raise up these concerns on our hearts today:

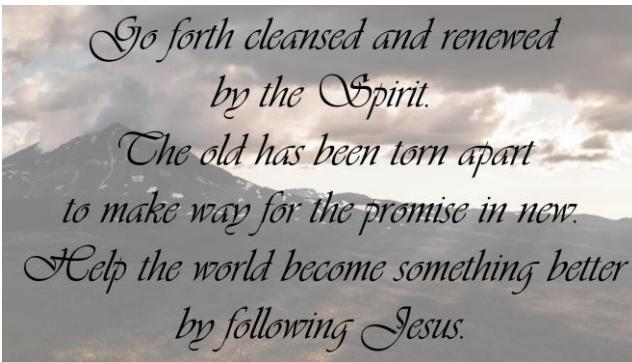
- Healing touch and comfort for all who are ailing.
 - Coronavirus victims - isolated; school; out-of-work; health care workers (especially: Marie Curri, Laura Davis, Nicole Marshall, Vince Marshall, Heidi Newton, Jennifer Tibbens-Scalzo) & those serving critical needs
 - **Kenneth Grewe** - heart attack and covid
 - **Gloria Dubois** - recover from illness, thinks of folks
 - **Sister Kathleen Heffron** - stroke ~ 2 weeks ago
 - **Doris Tracy** - (Rural Services clothing) - died Jan 3
 - **Betty Graham** - positive covid result
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- Thanks for
 - Dale Swind - home from hospital, stroke recovery
 - -
- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
 - Travelers
 - Family far off
- Social unrest - dismantle racism and reform problem systems
- Guide our Leaders - local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.
- Help us to be fearless in talking about our faith as a normal part of daily living.
 - For the sake of this our local church, one part of Your great church, guide each one of us this week to invite someone to come know You better.
 - Help us to encourage one another toward faith in You and toward living together in true Christian community.

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,
<The Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "Hymn of Promise" UMH #707>

<Benediction>



background adapted from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/follow-me/epiphany-baptism-of-the-lord-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/epiphany-baptism-of-the-lord-year-b-graphics>

Go forth cleansed and renewed by the Spirit.
The old has been torn apart to make way for the
promise in new.
Help the world become something better by following
Jesus.