

## The Baptism of our Lord

January 10, 2009

### Water

- I. Water is central to life and to our faith lives. Today is the baptism of our Lord. Jesus was baptized with water by John. But Christ himself baptizes us with the Holy Spirit so that we might do God's will. As we reflect on baptism, we remember that we are baptized into the life and death of Jesus and water is the earthly element in this first sacrament.
- II. But water is not always a source of life. Those living in Ocean Springs, MS where 22 members and friends of First Lutheran were this week know that water is not always a blessing. Almost 5 years ago, Hurricane Katrina brought water and wind with great destruction. Even in OT times, people knew the destructive power of water. Water was a symbol for chaos. So our passage from Isaiah has a promise from God that we will never be alone when we pass through the waters and the rivers will not overwhelm us. But the waters did overwhelm the people of the Gulf coast but water is also part of the healing.
- III. This week water was part of everyone's life we helped. Mrs. Lewis is a widow whose home has much water and wind damage still. Water this week became a gift of life for the new flowers in her yard. Thanks to Anthony's vision and Roni's need to keep the group busy, an unplanned yard project occurred this week. Now the new pansies are little compared to the yard Mrs. Lewis once had – flowers all around the house, banana trees, peach and lemon trees, and vegetable garden. But it was still a beginning. Water is giving new life to her yard.
- IV. Miss Obie, also a widow now, was both thankful and fearful of water. She remembers her and her neighbors evaluating the house with the help of three boats on the street. In the storm she lost many of her belongings and much of her house was destroyed. Since then, she has lost a son and her husband to death. Not to mention her uncle who just died this Christmas and her neighbor who she fears was dying this week. Yet despite all of these factors, we heard the baptized child of God in Miss Obie proclaim over and over that "God is good. God is good all the time!" This week water was a blessing since she could finally wash her clothes in her own washing machine. But on Tuesday there was not much rejoicing when our group hooked up the washing machine and tested it. All went well until the rinse cycle and water bubbled out of the kitchen sink. But with the help of Al, Art, and Don and some snaking the next day, Miss Obie was able to wash clothes.
- V. The other house that our team worked on this week was owned by Joshua Jesse, a WW II vet. He still lives in a FEMA cottage while his old home is restored. With help from our group, his house is now insulated and sided to protect it from the weather. He has only rough plumbing in the house, so there is no water yet. The only water we used was to clean up mud from dry walling on Friday. Dave and I experienced a little degree of misery in washing trays and putty knives with cold water in cold weather, but that was nothing compared to what the whole group working on that house experience on Monday and Tuesday. I know that we have no right to complain about weather to anyone in Greensburg this week, but Malcolm, the Huls, Cindy, Beth, Vicar Jack, Charlie and Dave and others who were prepared for 40 or 50 degree weather but worked outside in the 20s were cold. The joy of hot water as they showered with their church family was much appreciated those two days.
- VI. Water does bring destruction and also new life. But today as we remember the baptism of our Lord, we also remember that we were called by name in our own baptisms. We are God's children because we are baptized. Rejoice because water and God's word has saved us. Every time we see the healing power of water, it can remind us the gift of new life through Christ!