

Baptism is the sacrament through which we are united to Jesus Christ and given part in Christ's ministry of reconciliation. Baptism is the visible sign of an invisible event: the reconciliation of people to God. It shows the death of self and the rising to a life of obedience and praise. It shows also the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on those whom God has chosen. In baptism, God works in us the power of forgiveness, the renewal of the Spirit, and the knowledge of the call to be God's people always. (UCC Book of Worship)

**'Wade in the Water'**

chorus

Wade in the water, wade in the water children  
Wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water.

1

See that host all dressed in white,  
God's gonna trouble the water.  
The leader looks like the Israelite,  
God's gonna trouble the water.

2

See that band all dressed in red,  
God's gonna trouble the water.  
Looks like the band that Moses led,  
God's gonna trouble the water.

3

If you don't believe I've been redeemed,  
God's gonna trouble the water,  
Just follow me down to Jordan's stream,  
God's gonna trouble the water.

*Spiritual by James Abbington*



**'Wading in the Water'**

I'm guessing that the only words this child heard before being plunged into the baptismal tank were those terrifying ones: 'death of self' and 'God's gonna trouble the water'. After all, when her survival instinct kicked in, the trust word, 'obedience' (aka, obeying mommy and daddy), the word host that she heard as, 'ghost', and that happy word, 'praise', everybody was singing, didn't seem like words that could save her in her current life and death situation. I'm also guessing that when this child was baptized, the only word that came out of her mouth was . . . 'NOooooo'!

**PRAISE THE LORD!** in capital letters with an exclamation point was how the church family was singing. Today our hymn of praise comes from psalm 146. It is the first in a series of hymns that begins and ends with 'Praise the Lord!' (hal-le-lu-yah). It is a unique one that summarizes the heart of the Torah (laws of God for God's children), fills the soul with the will and ways of



God, and enlivens the spirit in the life long human vocation of Loving as God loves us. It's a psalm that Jesus may have memorized and prayed on his pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem to worship in the glorious temple that king Solomon had built for Yahweh. In concert with other Jews climbing the steps into the temple, Jesus may have prayed Israel's song, offering up his whole being and life to God. 'Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul I will praise the Lord all my life, I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. Praise the Lord! is what we do too. . . turning our minds toward the Divine and opening our hearts to a faithful and obedient relationship with God.

Praise the Lord! Do not put your trust in princes in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing (v. 3-4). These verses warn against relying on self or any human being. Biblical commentators note: 'In the psalms and the Bible as a whole, wickedness is essentially the decision to trust oneself rather than to trust God . . . To succumb to this temptation is to invite destructive consequences . . . and as theologian Claus Westermann suggests: The directing of praise to a hu(man), an idea, or an institution disturbs and finally destroys life itself (Texts for Preaching, p. 375).

Praise the Lord! I will not put my trust in mortal man who cannot see, who cannot save and whose plans amount to nothing. I will not pray for what I think should happen, I will not pray for how I think things should be. In her weavings article on prayer, author Maggie Ross notes that: 'In our desperation to pray for a loved one in crisis or for our own needs and desires, we often feel strongly about what the best outcome should be, and we frame our prayers (and sometimes fill them with bribes) toward this end. These prayers are useful if they help us examine what we think and feel, but our knowledge and understanding of the larger picture, much less the depth of the heart of the person we are praying for, is at best fragmentary and provisional. In reality

it is impossible for us to know what will work for the highest good . . . Most of the time we cry out to God because we feel trapped in some way. We feel ourselves being drawn by circumstances out of our control into the vortex of a single inexorable future. The same obsessive thoughts repeat over and over. If these obsessive thoughts become obsessive prayers, we are only sinking more deeply into fear (The Space of Prayer, Weavings XX11, p. 4). The psalmist allowed only two short verses for contrasting human help with the help of God. He allowed only enough prayer space for the naming and the gathering up of the things that need Divine attention and a quick letting go of them into the wisdom and loving care of God. The benefit of this shortened prayer space is that, we 'let go and let God.'

Praise the Lord! He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked. In the gospel accounts of Jesus' life, the early church told stories of times when Jesus' public ministry mirrored the vocation of Israel's God, his Abba. In fact, those were the only stories that they told.

Praise the Lord! Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the seas, and everything in them—the Lord, who remains faithful forever. Blessed are you, who claim your core identity . . . beloved children of God. Blessed is this baptismal day, as Ryan and Jaxon are welcomed into God's reign of Reconciling Love. Blessed is our community of faith, as we hear Jesus' summons to follow him.

Prayer: We praise you, Jesus-God-Spirit, for reigning forever in all generations. Bless our faith in You, as we wade together in the waters of baptism. Amen.