



# One Page Sermon

## By Pastor Robb McCoy

### January 8, 2023

Worship Every Sunday at 9:30 AM

## The Baptism of Christ

Sermon from January 8, 2023

Scripture: Matthew 3:1-17

There are not a lot of pigeons around here. A few weeks ago though, I was in Chicago and they were everywhere. They pretty much stay out of the way, but every once in awhile they come at you – especially if you are carrying food.

I was at the open-air market in Daley Plaza doing some Christmas shopping. I was walking next to a guy who was eating a big Bavarian pretzel. Suddenly a pigeon descended upon us, came at the pretzel, and scared the bejesus out of both of us. I felt the flap the wing and heard the flutter. I threw my arms up to shoo it away and probably let out an audible “agh.” I’m quite sure it was an ungraceful (and probably comical) sight.

Pigeons descending on you is not a pleasant, peaceful moment. I share this because the only difference between a pigeon and a dove is etymology. Dove comes from an old Norse word. Pigeon comes from Latin and then French. In fact, if you go to Google Translate and enter the words “pigeon” and then “dove” in languages like French and Greek, you’ll see this more clearly. There are about 300 different species that can be labeled either pigeon or dove, but for the most part the only difference is a slight variation in size and color.

Most of us think of the moment that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus as a moment of sheer peace and tranquility. It is the grace of God descending upon the Son of God. The heavens open. The voice of God is heard. It is a breathtaking moment of light and love. It is the exact opposite of the moment the pigeon descended upon my pretzel.

And isn’t this just like the Holy Spirit? Sometimes the Spirit descends like a dove. It can move us to tears. She can stir in us great emotion and joy. The Spirit can come at a moment of undeniable peace that surpasses all understanding. And sometimes the Spirit comes like a pigeon, scaring the bejesus out of us (or the Jesus into us).



*Baptism of Christ, by David Zelenka, 2005*  
Credit: [Wikimedia commons](#).

Making us kick and flail and scream and wonder what the heck is happening.

We like to think that in this moment, the Spirit descended upon Jesus with light and love. Think about the context of the scene though – John the Baptist with his camel hair and strange diet, out in the wilderness away from any civilization, wading in the mud of a shallow river, insulting the VIPs and power brokers, shouting about fire and snakes, surrounded by crowds who were probably hungry and poor. This sounds like the kind of place a pigeon would hang out.

The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in a cacophony of people. She descended in the Wilderness, in the margins and among the marginalized. The Spirit descended – maybe it was a picture of peace and tranquility. But maybe it was a pigeon. I know in my life the Spirit has been a little of both. Regardless of the Spirit being a pigeon or a dove, there is one thing that I believe is constant every time the Spirit comes – the voice of God speaking words of encouragement and love.