Sermon-based Small Groups

_____ of _____

1stPresDowntown

A Shared Mission

Matthew 3:13-17

Week of October 18, 2026

This week's scripture:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God's Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from the heavens said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

1. Why Is He Here?

The sermon described Jesus' baptism as an act of solidarity: he enters our waters not because he needs to, but because we do. Where in your life do you most need to be reminded that God does not watch from a distance? What does it mean to you that Jesus steps into the line with us?

2. Forgiven: The Waters Declare It
Forgiveness in this sermon is not something we earn through confession—it is something declared over us by the One who stood in our place. Is it easier for you to think of forgiveness as something you achieve or something you receive? What would it look like to live from forgiveness as a settled foundation rather than a goal you keep working toward?

3. Made New: The Dove and the Opened Heavens
The sermon drew a connection to Genesis 1: the Spirit hovering over the waters, creation beginning. In baptism, Matthew is saying, something new is being created. Not an improved version—a new creation, genuinely begun. Where are you most tempted to live as if the old self is still the real you? What would it look like to practice believing you are new?

4. Called: The Voice from Heaven
Three things are spoken over Jesus at his baptism: identity ("my Son"), belonging ("the Beloved"), and delight ("with whom I am well pleased")—and all three come before he has done anything. The sermon emphasized that the Father's pleasure precedes the performance. How does that sequence challenge the way you relate to God? Do you find it easier to believe God is pleased with who you are or with what you do?

5. A Shared Mission: Stepping Into His Waters
The sermon described the solidarity of baptism as moving in both directions: Jesus enters our waters so that we can enter his. What does it mean to you to be "baptized into Christ" rather than into an institution or a tradition? How does that shape the way you think about what you're part of at 1st Presbyterian?

The sermon closed with an invitation: "Live from your baptism." Practically, what does that mean for you this week? Of the three movements—forgiven, made new, called—which feels most available to you right now, and which feels most like something you need to grow into? What would one concrete step look like?