"Leadership and Followership"
by Rev. John C. Tittle

Scripture Reading: Mark 1:4-11

[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."

Discussion Questions:

1. What jumps out at you about this passage?

2. Can you think of a time where a parent or father or mother figure in your life spoke an encouraging word over you?

3. Aristotle once said, "he who cannot be a good follower cannot be a good leader." How do you see that principle at work in John the Baptist? In Jesus the Messiah?

4. Do you think it was hard for John the Baptist to transition from people coming to see him to people coming to see Jesus instead?

5. What did John the Baptist see in Jesus that was different than him?

6. If Jesus was without sin, why do you think he was baptized?

7. How would you define the word repentance? Do you think it is appropriate for Presbyterians to call for repentance?

8. Why do you think God affirmed Jesus at this point in his life? Why did he use both visual and verbal means to do this?

9. After the Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove, he was sent out to the desert to be tempted. Why would the Spirit ever do that, isn't that leading us into temptation?