

Sermon - Genesis 1:1-10, Mark 1:4-11 Matthew 28:16-20 Jan. 11, 2009

Being All Wet is All Right - Our New Way to Live

Water. Very much a part of the life of our Church - visible to us now in wonderful views. Genesis says – it was out of a dark watery chaos that God brought light to life, and life from water. And later – Darwin delved deep into the mystery of life, and, wonder of wonders – said the same thing – life from water.

And for each of us, it was from the watery womb that our lives came to be. There clearly must be some thing about being all wet that is all right. In fact, the fact is, that the greatest crisis that may face the human race is not the lack of food. As many people as do die of hunger every day. The looming larger threat to human life will be the lack of fresh drinkable water.

And that, by the way, is the only good thing I can think to say about the beer ads I saw while watching the some of the bowl games - Drinkability. Bad ads. But maybe a slogan for one of the world's pressing needs – water that has – yes – drinkability – life saving drinkability.

And, in a strange twist on Jesus' words, Jesus, who sent his disciples into the world to baptize all people. It is now the case in some places in Africa that the Muslim faith is attracting more converts than Christianity – because – the Muslim missionaries drill wells in villages – and then – village leaders, even Christians, allow them to build mosques.

But I am happy to report that the Detroit Presbytery is doing this in Kenya. And it appears as though there must be something all right about being all wet. Water focused.

And maybe, there is something very much all right – and very basic to life, in this thing, this sacrament, this use of water for what we call Baptism.

Some how – creation – life out of watery chaos, and our own births, and the success of human life on earth, and the new life promised to us by Jesus Christ, all find focus in water.

So - How wet are you? How much does your baptism mean to you? Now! How important is it for you or for anyone to be baptized? Let's jump in and find out how fine the water can be.

Let us pray.

Lord of life, deluge us with words that carry to us the message of the meaning of our lives - and may the words of my mouth and thoughts of these your faithful people be acceptable in your sight and your word to us this day in Christ. Amen.

Baptism – it's not a question of if, for Christians. Jesus made that clear. We read it. Go – and baptize. It's just a question of when, and where, and how – and most deeply, why?

When? Is it best early – 8th. Day of life - from that Jewish circumcision thing, only a lot easier? Or is later better when the party A – me - knows what the party B – the Church,

is doing to me and why. When – doesn't really matter – though – for believers and their children, sooner the symbol the better for all.

Where? Well - It seems anywhere will do. Roadside puddle, that's what Philipp did. Or a river – John's deal. Or a lake – we've done that here. Not this time of year. Though I've heard one pastor did. Or at a font with drops from that river Jordan place we just read about. It doesn't seem to matter where.

But how? Funny now, that how gets to be such a big deal. A sprinkle, splash, or swim for your life deal. Yes – there clearly were those words - we even say them here - where we mostly just sprinkle. That dying with Christ, that's going clear down under – we will be raised up with him to new life.

But how important is the how? No body dies at Baptism – try as some Baptist preachers do try for that effect. I've heard them say – take a deep breath. But no one dies.

It's the symbol. It's the water. It's getting at least a little wet that matters, that reminds us of what it does mean. That it is about new life, new beginnings. The old washed away. Us made clean and ready for the new life, the life that leads not to death but to eternal life. The life in which not we - but He – Jesus Christ, is Lord, is in charge, is guardian guide and stay! Leads us out beyond our failing ways into his way and truth and light.

And Baptism is a strong symbol for parents, too, early on, of the call that is theirs and will come to their child. Bringing the child for baptism is a symbol of parents' responsibility to care for God's gift of life to them.

But it is also a reminder that the child is first and last God's child and that parents may guide a child's life, but finally must let go of the child to be his or her God's own person. Baptism is the first step in that process. This simple act – a symbol of so much that can and should be a part of our lives.

So, no real question of if – for children, or for us. Or really, much question about when or where, or even how. But why? Why? Why do this – yes – this sometimes even silly thing – where a baby cries and fusses and out volumes the preacher some times. Or – even – and God does not forbid it - poops in the Pastor's arms.

Why do this thing – with immersed folk soaking wet and sputtering for air? Why talk about cleansing when there is no soap and little water? Why?

I was listening to some of the analysts discussing the truly deeply serious situation we are now in – in Detroit, Michigan, around the world. The painful situation many of us – friends, family, neighbor, selves – are facing. Jobs lost and life plans at risk - and not just jobs lost – but in some third world countries now – lives lost for lack of money now to buy food, or even move it

And even though I think I know why Baptism is so important for me – I was reminded of its meaning and purpose and power by the analysts. What they said was – in the language of our faith - Sin. Simply – Sin. That’s why we are in the boat we’re in.

That’s why you – the Church – baptized me. Baptized you. Does this Baptism thing. Splashes water all over our very sinful human selves - To remind us of the cleansing we need, and the new and different way of life we must begin to live, over and over again.

We’re sinners, and we just simply persist in our own sinning. And we need some outward visible sign of how our sin can and does get dealt with.

The analysts of our crisis said what we know full well. Sinners, like you and like I, got greedy. Greedy. And this sinful greed is a major reason for the deep and devastating rut we’re in right now. From the brightest and best minds among us – the whizzes of wall street - to the not so smart persons who simply took the too good to be true deals on real estate. That were just that.

And our greed got us - our sin sank us – this time –big time.

Someone said – what virtually everyone of us did - We simply ignored one of the oldest of simple folk sayings - what goes up, must come down. And it did.

From the sin of security fraud, to the sin of stupidity – our mess is a sin full thing. And it’s the reason for this thing – this simple Sacrament – of Baptism. It’s the why.

Why – because we do need to face up to our responsibilities – and Baptism reminds us of this truth.

Why – because we need to remember that we must be forgiven before we can forgive ourselves or others.

Why – because we need to receive the gift of new life – even as our lives are a gift to us in the first place.

And its all this that Baptism tells us – tells us in the words we say – and will say again this morning. And that Baptism demonstrates for us.

Whether done for us as infants or as adults, or every time its done for others in our presence, baptism reminds us of what was done for us - and who we now are because of it.

Why? Why – because this poor human mind and spirit and soul of mine, needs this symbol. I need this simple sacrament – this critical visible sign of the inner invisible truth. - That I am a sinner.

That I cannot cleanse myself, nor give myself the new time, the new beginning, the new day I need and keep on needing.

That’s why we do it to you – and why we do it to whomever - here – right in front of one another. We say it – for all our sakes - every time we do it.

You are cleansed. You are forgiven. You are given new life in Jesus Christ,
through his life, and his suffering, and his death, and his resurrection.

You are baptized. Made one with him. And maybe, maybe you don't need this
reminder as much as I do. But I do – and I know it again in the middle of this mess
we are all in.

The mess of the economy, the mess of human sin – from Kwame to Wall Street Ponzi pushers,
to my trouble with speed limits, and so much more.. I need the message - Yes – we are all wet
– and our wisdom cannot save us from drowning. But its all right. Because by God's grace,
through Jesus Christ, through being made one with him through my Baptism and yours - we
are given a new way to live -

So - come - and remember who you are, and – now – whose you are – God's forever child.

Proclaimed for you and for me – in the waters of our Baptism. Amen.

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