

EVE OF THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST | SEPTEMBER 10, 2022

EXODUS 32:7-14 | PSALM 51:1-10 | 1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17 | LUKE 15:1-10

This is for Jaxson. But if the rest of you want to hang out and listen, that's fine.

Jaxson, you are being baptized today. From your perspective, this is going to be sort of funny. There will be a bunch of people around you, you'll get a little wet, someone will put oil on your forehead, and then someone will hand you a candle. So just to clear things up for you, I want to explain exactly what's going on as simply as I can. Your baptism is about your past, your future, and your present.

First, your baptism is about your past. You are being joined to the body of Christ, through whom God has acted throughout history. When we give thanks over the font, we'll remember God's salvation throughout history. The voice over the waters at creation. The covenant made with Noah and the earth. The exodus out of slavery and the sustaining of God's people in the wilderness.

We remember those stories not just because they all involve water. But because they show us how God has acted for creation and all God's people throughout history. They are stories about other people, but they are stories that give meaning and sustenance to our life. Those stories are becoming your stories.

And God will continue to act in your life in that same creative, liberating, and sustaining way. When you read those stories from the past, you are reading them not as an observer, but as a contemporary. When God creates humanity in the divine image, that includes you. When God makes covenants with Noah and Abraham, those covenants include you. When you are baptized today, you are being grafted into God's story of creating and redeeming creation. Christ is the origin of your life.

Second, your baptism is about your future. You are being joined to the body of Christ, in whom God will redeem and renew all creation. There are a whole bunch of promises being made today. In fact, baptisms are all about promises. Because promises draw our attention into God's future. They create a new reality, a new future for us to believe and trust in. So who will be making promises today? Well, your parents, for one. Your parents will promise "to live with [you] among God's faithful people, bring [you] to the word of God and the holy meal, teach [you] the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, place in [your] hands the holy scriptures, and nurture [you] in faith and prayer, so that [you] may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace." That's a lot, but they'll get it.

Your sponsors will make promises. They will promise to "nurture [you] in the Christian faith as [they] are empowered by God's Spirit, and to help [you] live in then covenant of baptism and in communion with the church." And this assembly, including a bunch of people you don't really know, will promise to "support [you] and pray for [you] in [your] new life in Christ." These people, your parents, your sponsors, and this assembly, will help you grow in faith in God and love toward your neighbors at every stage of your life.

And, most important, God will make promises to you, too. In the Small Catechism, Luther said that it "brings about the forgiveness of sins, redeems from death..., and gives eternal life." Because Christ has been raised from death, the new life he lives with God the

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Father through the power of the Holy Spirit is promised to you, too. Christ is the ultimate end of your life.

And finally, your baptism is about your present. We're doing the present last because God's story and God's promises won't just change how you understand your past or your future, but they will change how you live every day of your life. You are being joined to the body of Christ, through whom God has acted throughout history.

When your forehead is marked with the sign of the cross, it is a sign that God goes with you everywhere you go. There is no experience you have in life that God doesn't have alongside you. So when we say that you should "remember your baptism," we don't just mean that you should just think about what happened on September 10, 2022. We mean that you should remember God's promise to be with you in every stage and station of life. Remember that you never live alone. To use the image of today's gospel reading, you are always pursued by the grace of God. You are always being sought out. You are worth God's time and effort and care.

That will change how you live. Because you are baptized, you will never have to wonder what God thinks about you. God sees you in the light of Christ. So at every moment of your life, you are beloved, cherished, and have integrity as a child of God.

And because you don't have to worry whether you're loved or whether you're impressive or whether you're deserving of respect, you can take all that energy and put it into loving and serving and caring for God's world. Christ will be the constant companion in your life. And with your parents, your sponsors, and this assembly, we'll be your companions, too. Walking together each day toward the kingdom of God.

Joseph Schattauer Paillé, Pastor