

Isaiah 49:8-16a
Psalm 62:6-14
I Corinthians 4:1-5
MATTHEW 6:24-34

“For God alone my soul in silence waits; truly, my hope is in him.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Erik, today you have come to be baptized. You have come to participate in a very ancient rite—a rite that is nearly two thousand years old.

It is, as the *Book of Common Prayer* says, a rite of initiation. Through the water and the Holy Spirit, you will be fully initiated in Christ’s Body the Church. In fact, the Church says that you are so fully a member of Christ’s Body after your baptism that you may receive the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

The *Book of Common Prayer* also says that something will happen to you through Holy Baptism that can never be changed. God will make a bond with you that is indissoluble. That means that nothing can ever break or change that bond. Nothing that you can do or fail to do can break the bond that God creates through your baptism. Nothing anything in creation does can break that relationship that God creates with you this morning. It cannot be broken. It cannot be changed. It cannot be dissolved.

You will also be marked—marked forever as Christ’s. You will be marked as belonging to God. You will be marked as holy—as one belonging to and consecrated to God.

What happens today is not magic. It does not guarantee that you will be successful, happy, popular, wise, brilliant, healthy, rich or a million other things that I can name. It does not mean that you will always be good or do what you or others think that you should. It does not mean that you will always understand where God is calling you. It also does not guarantee that you will always follow where God calls.

You will also most assuredly know joy, love, peace, awe and clarity in your life. You will most assuredly know confusion, disappointment, loss and pain in your life. That is part of being human and being alive. Baptism does not take away your humanity or your human experience and give you something “saintly” in its place. In fact if you read the lives of the great saints, it is through their very humanity that we are able to see and know their holiness. They are not plaster perfections but very real persons who know God and let God live in their lives.

Baptism is a sacrament of grace. Baptism is a sign—a statement of God’s freely given gift. Today, through baptism, we place you in the hands of our creator. We place you into the hands of the creator of all that is—this amazing, astounding creation, as the child of God. Today, through baptism, we place you in the hands of Jesus, the crucified one, who has walked our path and known all of the joys, happiness, pain and loss that you will know in life. He will walk with you in compassion and mercy seeking to bring you to fullness of life in God. Today we call the Holy Spirit to enter your life to burn as a fire

of liveliness and energy in you that opens you to God, others, yourself and all of life. Today, through baptism, we call the Holy Spirit to enter your life as a cleansing and purifying fire and as a counselor and guide. Today we place you in the hands of a God who loves you and says that you and all children are precious.

As we go through the service, your parents, your godparents and everyone in this congregation will make a number of vows, promises and commitments about many things like renouncing Satan, renouncing all sinful desires, turning to Jesus Christ, putting your whole trust in Jesus' grace and love, continuing in the Apostle's teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers plus a whole lot of other promises that I do not have time to even list this morning let alone explain them all (as if I could). As we make them, I am sure that we mean to keep them, but let me assure you that we will not be nearly as faithful in keeping the promises that we make as God will be faithful in keeping the bond that God creates. I can assure you that we will fail to keep them, maybe more often than we keep them. As you grow, you will learn that we, as humans, can be wonderful but also rather unreliable in keeping some of the promises we make. I hope that this quality of humans never leads you to think that God is the same.

We will make all make vows, for ourselves and for you. They are important! As you grow up, I hope that you are taught them and come to understand them. I hope that you seek to follow them in your life. But never, ever think that all of this is about a scorecard. If you do everything right, you will get stars on your chart, be declared good and finally be saved. Likewise never, ever think that if you fail or make a mistake or sin, you are condemned and not loved by God.

Erik, I can assure you that in your life you will do many good things and bring much joy and happiness. In fact, I bet you already have. I can also assure you that you will do wrong. You will focus on yourself, ignore others, use others, cause pain, even, at times, be cruel or evil. That, unfortunately, seems to be what we humans do. At all of those times, remember that the bond God makes to you today in baptism is indissoluble. In compassion and love, God does not condemn you, no matter what people may do, but calls you to remake your life. At times you will know confusion; your ideas will change. That is great! It is called growing. You never will get it all-straight. May you grow in knowledge and understanding every day that you are alive. God is always calling us to new knowledge, new understanding, to new life. When you meet a person who has learned everything and is sure that they have all of the answers—run. Likewise, if you ever get to that place where you are also sure that you have all knowledge and have all of the answers—run. Run back to God for you have lost him.

By now Erik, you must be wondering what ails all of us. If this baptism is not magic that will guarantee me all of the good things that I want, and if you are all going to be making a bunch of promises that you know that neither you nor I are going to keep, why are we doing all of this? I am sure, Erik, that you are thinking that surely we can come up with better things to do than to perform some ancient ritual over me. I know that I can—like sleeping and eating for starters.

Erik, we are doing it because it is a sacrament of grace, love and power.

We do it to ask God's blessing on you, to ask God to ignite a flame in you that will burn through eternity.

Erik, we do it because of love—God’s love and ours. Erik, we do it because God calls:

compassion calling to compassion

mercy calling to mercy

humility calling to humility

love calling to love

life calling to life.

We do it because as the writer of the Letter to the Ephesians put it:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14-21)

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