

Being With – Baptisms (Romans 6:3-11, Matthew 3:14-17)

Good morning Church! It is so good to be here this morning in this celebration of four baptisms: Susan, Margaret and her daughter Ava, and James. A special welcome to any friends and family who have come to support and share in this moment.

Baptism is highly symbolic, and it carries much meaning. It is a symbol of:

- our being made children of God,
- our being united and welcomed into Christ's body, the church,
- repentance, (that is, turning away from sin and all that disfigures us and the world), and being washed and forgiven,
- and of dying to our 'old self,' that is, our selfish, self-centredness to be raised to new life, a life that's lived empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God within us.

As we begin a new series called *Being With*, it is this last one that I want to focus on this morning. That our baptism is an act of *being with* Jesus. It is a participation in, a sharing with his life, death and resurrection. When we baptise infants, we often focus on the "welcome to the family" aspect because it can weird people out talking about the symbolic nature of death in baptism with a baby! But this is the primary metaphor of baptism. As we have just heard from St Paul in Romans 6:

Have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism.

When we go into the water, we are symbolically joining with him in his death. In some mysterious way, our baptism is entangled with Jesus' life, death and resurrection. And, we believe that somehow in the incarnation, Christ's life became entangled with all of humanities. This is why Jesus himself, who did not sin, was baptised by John as an act of repentance. He was taking upon himself all the sin, all the brokenness of the world. But we are not only *being with* (entangled with) Christ in his death, it is also with his life, as Paul said:

And.. since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

In coming back out of the water, we also recognise that because of this entanglement with Jesus' death and resurrection, we too get to live lives that are empowered by the Holy Spirit. We go down into the water symbolically as our old self, and we emerge from the water looking and smelling like Christ. Baptism symbolises that we are like Christ in the eyes of God because of what Jesus has done. Hence, in the same way when Jesus came out of the water at his baptism, the words were heard, "*This is my dearly loved Son (my beloved son), who brings me great joy (in whom I delight, am well pleased).*"

Many have referred to this as *The Great Exchange*. But this sounds quite transactional, simply that Jesus did something for us. I believe this age of quantum physics gives us a better metaphor: quantum entanglement, where two particles are connected, relationally entwined with each other across time and space. In his incarnation, Jesus came into the world, lived amongst us, to *be with us*, to participate in the fullness of humanity, and in doing so—through his life, death and resurrection—made it possible for broken creatures such as us to be caught up in and to participate in the life of the Divine. To become enmeshed in the eternal relationship of Love that brought all things into being.

So, while to our senses, all we might see is a few people getting wet in a tub this morning, there is so much more going on than meets the eye. This moment is nothing less than an act of *being with God and* getting caught into the life of love in our Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

One final thought: we know that baptism is not a once and done thing. Paul says we are set free from the power of sin. So, why do we still go on after baptism, struggling with the same things? Because, this is not the culmination of the journey, but merely the beginning, of learning to *be with* Jesus. That is why Paul says, "have you forgotten that we were joined with Christ in his death?" and to continue to "consider (think, ponder, contemplate)" the fact we have been brought alive to new life. It is not that when we struggle, and turn away from the Way of Jesus, that we need to get re-baptised. No, rather we simply need to *remember*, and *contemplate* the new life that we have already been given, the life of Christ that we have become entangled with, and the Holy Spirit, our Helper and Guide along the Way.

Therefore, if you are here this morning, and baptised, yet feeling disconnected and dislocated from a relationship of *being with* Christ; we want to invite you—as you come to the table of communion after the baptisms—to *remember* your baptism, to place your hand in the water of the font, and to consider the reality that your worth is not based on what you have done or not done, but that your life is now entangled with Christ's. That God looks at you and sees you coming up out of the water with Jesus: "This is my dearly loved daughter, my beloved son, who brings me great joy."

Amen.