

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Seventh Sunday of Easter - Year B

63rd Week of Pandemic

Isla Crummitt Baptism in Wheeling, WV

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

Psalm 1

I John 5:9-13

John 17:6-19

05/16/2021

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

[Jesus prayed:] 6“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. 12While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. 14I have given them your word, and

the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup>I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

The Gospel of our Lord.

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

### **Called**

Good morning! As the called pastor of St. Paul's, one of the jobs that I am responsible for is the upkeep of the congregational register. What this really means is that our secretary Sue reminds me when I forget to update what I have nicknamed the “Book of Life.” The parish record is a giant book that has every member since the formation of the congregation noted and detailed inside. It records when they joined, when and why they left, and where they are from. We also record funerals, weddings, confirmations, and baptisms. So, at some point in the next week I'll open the big red Book of Life and put in Isla's information. Whenever I make an addition I always wonder what the pastor who performed my own baptism was thinking when they added my name to the roles of First English Lutheran Church back in September of 1987.

You see, until recently when my parents moved and we found my baptismal candle, we only knew that my baptism happened at some point in September, because the pastor forgot to write in the actual date. Now, for most people this wouldn't be a problem. And as Pastor Bill Ridenhour reminded me, at least I had a month, unlike whoever was baptized after me, who the pastor forgot to even add the date in the book. But because I decided to do this whole pastor thing, I had to fill out forms for the national church that ask for not just your birth date, but you guessed it! Your baptismal date too! So at every step of the process or for every form I need to fill out for the national church, they ask for the date, I write in September of 1987, and they inevitably ask me to put in the correct date. To which I then have to explain this whole process all over again. Some synods, which are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's version of diocese if you're familiar with Catholic Church, celebrate a pastor's baptismal date, not birthday.

So, as you can see, baptisms are a critical component of what the church does. One of the last things that Jesus tells the disciples is "To go and baptize the nations." And while every baptism that I have performed has been important, something tells me that I won't forget this one. In a few minutes we're going to baptize Isla, and I can't begin to express how honored I am to be able to be a part of it. And I say that I am just a part of it because God is the one who does all the work at a baptism. As one scholar writes: *"God is the actor in holy baptism. In every baptism God joins a life to Christ's dying and rising, gives birth to a new creation, and breathes the holy and life-giving spirit. Every baptism proclaims Christ's active*

*faithfulness and love for us and for all of creation.*”<sup>1</sup> So, what we’re gathering together to do is pretty big stuff.

Let me be clear about your role in this baptism too. This is very much a communal act. You are not just mere observers while a few of us perform some sort of magic. Baptism takes place amidst community, and it falls on that community to take responsibility for helping Rick and Abby raise and guide Isla in the Christian faith. During the service the congregation is asked to take on that responsibility with a vow made before one another and before God. Take that vow seriously! You become a living guide for Isla in her walk with God. So be sure to pray and care for her.

We see this concern in our Gospel lesson from John. While the words can be a little confusing, Jesus is praying to God for guidance and direction for the disciples as he prepares to leave them. Jesus prays that the community may have life. And throughout out the years that prayer for life has been extended and given to the whole body of the church. Carmelo Álvarez writes that within this text there is a huge emphasis on eternal life, on abundant life. *“Which for John theologically is more than existential, intellectual, biological, or mystical life. It is life in all its fullness and blessings.”*<sup>2</sup>

Wow. That’s the life that God extends to us in baptism. That’s the life that God calls on US to help provide for one another. And it’s a life that is only possible when we take seriously God’s call in our lives. A call that reaches out to each and every person, inviting them into the love and joy of the life that takes place here in these waters of baptism.

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<sup>1</sup> Bushkofsky, Dennis, and Craig A. Satterlee. *The Christian life: Baptism and Life Passages*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2008. p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Bartlett, David L., and Barbara B. Taylor. *Feasting on the Word. Year B, Volume 2*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008. p. 544.

For some reason people think that being a Christian is just about following rules or obeying some specific set of criteria. But this couldn't be further from the truth. I mean I get it, take the words from our Psalm this morning *"Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night."*<sup>3</sup> We literally hear the word law in the text! But the writer isn't speaking about law in the traditional sense, what is intended is the idea that when we take God seriously, when we read scripture, when we pray, when we think on what God is doing in the world, we find something more. James L. Mays writes that *"Here, 'torah of the LORD' is used in a comprehensive sense to refer to the whole body of tradition through which instruction in the way and the will of the LORD is given to Israel. This psalmist knows torah in the written form, Scripture that one can read and absorb. It is from this written torah that wisdom for the living of life can be gained. It is the medium from which one can learn the way and the will of the LORD and store up that learning in one's heart so that it shapes the structure of consciousness. This is the reason why torah is the cause of delight, not because it is an available instrument of self-righteousness, material for a program of self-justification, but because the LORD reaches, touches, and shapes the human soul through it. For this psalm, torah is a means of grace."*<sup>4</sup>

Grace, the central gift of baptism. God's grace is the whole reason we gather together to give thanks. And out of God's love we show our own love when we come together to guide the newly baptized. So, with a lot of help

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 1:1-2 NRSV

<sup>4</sup> Mays, James L. *Psalms*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994. p. 41.

from God, and some help from each other, we can show Isla the fullness and breadth of God's love. And something tells me that this little girl will get all the love she could ever need. Amen.