

The Rev. Kimberly Reinholz  
Grace and Holy Trinity Church  
August 18, 2019  
Luke 12:49- 56

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I was baptized. I baptized my children. My nieces and nephew were baptized and I am glad to renounce my relationships as daughter, mother, aunt, and sister in order to live into my baptism. I have not renounced my relationships with all my family members because there is division and derision amongst us, rather I do so because I am made different in the sacrament of Baptism and none of those relationships hold the same weight.

When we are baptized we are changed. We are reborn. We are made new. It is a mystery how it happens, but it does happen and the change is seen through the use of ordinary symbols with sacramental meanings. Sacramental symbols being things that are outward and visible signs of inward invisible grace.

The symbols of the Baptism of God are water and oil. I had never thought of it before in

this way, but let us take a moment to think about the properties of water and oil together for a moment. What I remembered from High School Science is that they are insoluble but actually when I checked that with a trusted source in reality they are “immiscible”- I did have to double check the reason behind this. Water and Oil are insoluble because Water is polar and oil is non-polar which means that one cannot dissolve into the other. They don’t mix.

What does it mean that the symbols of water and oil are used to mark us in baptism - if these two very simple elements of life on earth don’t mix, cannot be blended together, and we know it and still we use them to indicate our initiation into a full relationship with God and The Church. Why did these symbols come to be used and not some other symbols like water and dye, or mud and seeds, or something that is compatible?

I am sure that there are church historians who can answer that question, but from a practical perspective, I wonder if the very nature of oil and water might be a metaphor for the

incompatibility of this world and the world that Jesus promises through baptism.

In today's Gospel Jesus tells his followers that his baptism is unlike any that they know. That the baptism he promises will bring division and discord. That the dream of peace will not be fulfilled in this age. That seems to be counter to everything I have ever come to know and believe about Jesus. It could be interpreted as conflicting with what Jesus taught us last week about seeing hope and being prepared for the Son of Man to come at an unexpected hour. If there isn't peace promised but division, where is the Love of God? Where is the Good in this news?

Here's the thing, we know where the good is in this news. Just like we know what it means when we see smoke rising from in front of us on the highway, just like we know what it means when the birds fall silent, just like we know what it means when we hear the emergency alert system, or when it's too quiet upstairs where our children are playing. Like the disciples knew what it meant when a cloud rose in the west and the wind blew from the south. We know how to

interpret danger. The Good news is that when we are baptized we are fully incorporated into the body of Christ and we are changed forever, marked as Christ's own, and no one else's, we know how to recognize hope too. Because it is by hope that we are transformed, and we are reminded that we are no longer subject to the hierarchical structure, the divisive structure of the world. We become like oil and water, when we are baptized.

Once baptized into Christ, Christians are no longer anyone's child, or sibling, or grandchild, all of the previous relationships all of the ways in which people relate to each other are forever broken because in Christ we all become children of God. We all are equal and there is no longer a distinction between us. We all become equal to one another, heirs of Christ, but not heirs in the sense of the eldest male heir will inherit the kingdom, but rather equal heirs with no difference in the allotment of the inheritance based on age or gender or filial piety.

This by its very nature destroys the relationships which the world has taught us are primary. It is radical. It is revolutionary. It is

breaking the cycle through a choice made either for yourself or by your parents to be baptized. We baptized babies into this - as parents we give up a worldly relationship with our children in order to make them siblings in Christ. As children we deny our parents, our siblings and everyone else who the world says should be important to us, not because they cease to be important. Rather because there is only one relationship which is primary once we are baptized.

That relationship is our relationship to the Triune God. When this relationship is primary than all other relationships reflect the nature of the choice which Christians have made to be disciples of Jesus. After choosing God's way, there is no other option than to treat every other person as our neighbor and to love them, as we love ourselves. It is intrinsic to what it means to be a Christian that no one person is greater or less important than any other person because they are, each and every one of us, a Beloved creation of God, and in baptism Christians become one with God, through the divine mystery.

Once Baptized, Christians have needed a reminder that we are not completely in this world, nor are we completely removed from it, so we have adapted "earthly" experiences to a sacramental level. We take an ordinary thing and begin to understand it at sacred through our Christian lens. What Jesus promises in today's Gospel is that the lens through which we see our relationships is distorted - no one is meant to be more loved or more powerful in a relationship - a father doesn't have power over a daughter, a mother over her son, a mother in law over a daughter in law, no one person is subject to anyone but God.

In this, knowing that we are loved, and loving one another we begin to recognize the hopeful signs before us. In this we tear down what has been taught to us by the world, by society, by institutions which are fallible and instead we build up a community of faithful people who come together weekly to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion, a community which believes that marriage is a reflection of the

relationship between God and God's beloved creation, which believes that healing and reconciliation are possible and that through the Holy oil, we are reminded that what the world offers does not mix with what God has promised.

We have been Baptized in Christ, and we are incorporated into the Body of Christ, we are no longer members of the societies to which we were born, the old things have passed away, including our relationships one to another, and new things are being raised up, this is the Good News. Let us come into the new age rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit to make us no longer understand ourselves as siblings assigned value in age order, children given preference dependent upon our gender assigned at birth, and in laws who have authority over one another, but instead let us be baptized and reminded of our incompatibility with those old systems instead belonging equally to God and to one another as beloved neighbors.

We are changed by this baptism which Jesus kindled with his resurrection. We are changed by the promises we make. We are empowered to change the world and welcome a

new creation. So let us do that let us keep the fire burning. Let the Holy Spirit be our guide and let us see the signs in front of us that promise a new life, a new way, and a new understanding where we are no longer embody a station of privilege or powerlessness dependent upon when and where and how we were born, but rather take our place as equally loved, equally responsible, equally yoked followers of Christ Jesus who started this fire by which we are baptized.

Amen