

After Baptism
Colossians 3:12-17
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
August 15, 2021
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Did you hear the wondering questions Maggie posed at the end of the baptism story?

“I wonder what it feels like to become one with The Light of Christ?”

“I wonder how it feels to make a special promise to God and be baptized?”

“I wonder what it feels like to go through the water and under the water?”

“I wonder how people share The Light of Christ with other people?” (*Children Worship & Wonder Baptism Story for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*).

Today we were witnesses as two young people got baptized. Today we celebrated them becoming “one with The Light of Christ.”

Today we also invited you to remember your baptism and to renew your commitments. Or, if you have yet to be baptized, to envision what baptism might look like for you and what it might mean in your life.

And today we are also reminded that baptism is not about a single moment in time, but about that moment *AND* every moment to follow.

Too often the language and behavior of Christians, and of the church, has made it look like baptism is about a single day, a single choice, a single moment. And too often people have treated that moment as if it is all about exchanging a dip in the water for a ticket into heaven. Too often people have seemed to live with the motto, “I’ve been baptized, I can do whatever I please.”

And yet there is no evidence in Jesus’ life or in the teachings of the early church that this is the case or the intention. Rather being a Christian, claiming a relationship with God through following in the footsteps of Jesus, is not about *one* choice but about the choices we make everyday...choices about how we live and how we “share The Light of Christ with other people”.

So, what happens after baptism?

Because the reality is also that we don’t baptize in magical water that changes the essence of who we are. Even though we talk about forgiveness as an

element of baptism, it doesn't mean that once we are baptized we never sin again, that we have become perfect.

Baptism doesn't magically or miraculously change us, but rather it challenges us...

- It challenges us to live up to the potential we were created with
- It challenges us to live in to the depths of our commitment to follow in the ways of Jesus
- It challenges us to live as those who are "one with The Light of Christ."

So, how do we do that?

There are many ways. And like all good things, the dance of living beyond the day of our baptism is two steps forward, and from time to time, one step back. Sometimes, it is one step forward and two steps back. Did you listen to the words of the song we opened with? That song, titled "I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry" is sung in the voice of God as God is present throughout each moment and stage of our lives. And in one of the verses it names God's presence when "in a blaze of light you wandered off to find where demons dwell."

Even after baptism this is sometimes the route we take, but we are reminded that no matter where we are on our journey, God is with us. And our life of faith is rooted in an ongoing commitment to strive to live in the ways of Jesus and to reflect the heart of God, and, even when we have stepped away, to always know we are welcome to start again.

And there are many passages of scripture that can give us direction as we do this work of living our faith. The one Cameron read for us today is one of those: *As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him* (Colossians 3:12-17, NRSV).

Friends, if we are honest, there are many words in this text that our world, our culture, tells us are about weakness. While here in the sanctuary we comfortably applaud concepts such as kindness and compassion, humility and meekness, patience and gratitude, forgiveness and unity, in our world these choices are often looked down upon.

We have in so many ways decided that it is weak to forgive, that people should deserve our help before we offer it, that kindness is good for those like us but not to be shared with those who are different. So many of our values are about creating groups of us vs. them or proving why we are stronger or better or smarter or more valuable.

And yet, we claim to follow Jesus who was a servant leader...Jesus who welcomed those who were left out...Jesus who gave second chances and even more...Jesus who turned the other cheek and even went to the cross when people chose violence and hatred over love.

The reality is that the baptismal vows we take are not easy. Rather they challenge us to truly live in Jesus' ways, to make choices that reflect our oneness with "The Light of Christ." They challenge us to live in ways that are contrary to the world as we claim that being kind and compassion, patient and meek, forgiving and loving is not weak, but in fact that these are acts of strength and faithfulness.

This is the challenge for us - not just today, but every day, in every moment, in every choice we make. And this is the challenge, not just for us as individuals, but for us as a community, to live together in ways that we support one another to live fully and faithfully through our baptisms and beyond. May it be so.