



THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

MAY 19, 2019

JOHN 13: 31-35

“WE ARE ALL ADOPTED”

When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

- Two Sundays ago, our daughter adopted two English Bulldogs, Meatball and Louie. Sounds like they should be Italian bulldogs.
- You can see their photos in the bulletin.
- It seems a couple were divorcing, the guy wasn't taking care of them, and they were too much for the soon-to-be single mom. So, Alayna adopted them.
- Adoption is one of the metaphors that the New Testament uses for our becoming part of the Kingdom of God. We are **adopted** as Children of God. The sacrament of Baptism declares, “We are born children of a fallen humanity; in the waters of baptism we are reborn (or adopted) as Children of God and inheritors of eternal life.”
- That's an odd statement. In plain English, we are born messed up. That's what sin means. We are all messed up in our peculiar way. But adopted, in spite of this, as Children of God.
- It is a beautiful statement. We are born screwed up, but it's hard to tell because we all look so cute as babies. And since Lutherans baptize infants, there is no time for us to straighten things out even if we could. Even if we are baptized as older children or adults, that usually just provides more evidence for us being not quite right.
- Take Meatball and Louie. They are six years old. When they breathe, they sound like a tornado is coming through. They slobber all over the place. Meatball had a mucus membrane growing over one eye. Louie had a double eye infection and an infection on his coat. Being older, it is easy to see that they are messed up.

- So, don't be fooled this morning. We need to watch out for Blake Bowers who we're baptizing this morning. Don't turn your back on him. He looks cute, but you never know....
- Baptism is the sacrament through which we get adopted. Adopted into a local faith community here at CLC and adopted into the entire Christian faith family. That's why we never, ever, rebaptize when someone joins our congregation. Were you baptized Roman Catholic? Come on in! Were you baptized Assembly of God? Come on in? Were you baptized in the church of the Northern Reformed Flying Baptists? Come on in!
- But it takes a long time to become part of a family. Each family is different. And we each have to learn how to be a part of our faith family.
- My first congregation was in Shenandoah, Virginia, resting between the Blue Ridge and Massanutten mountains. On certain mornings, I could step out on my front porch and see the steam rising from the moonshine stills hidden in the hollows of the Blue Ridge. I quickly learned that I should not drive up into the hollows by myself because I would not come out in one piece.
- One Sunday afternoon, my church council president, Lyniel Kite, came by the parsonage and handed me a mason jar of clear liquid and said, "This here is the good stuff."
- Now I did not have a course in seminary on what to do when your church council president hands you moonshine.
- So, I did what any good Lutheran pastor would do: I drank it.
- And, when guys in the congregation would sidle up to me and whisper, "What'd you think of the shine?" They seemed genuinely pleased when I replied, "it lit my head up."
- I think it also would have removed the rust on my fender.
- Now neither Paul Bell or Tim Wach has shown up at my door with moonshine. That doesn't seem to be how one becomes part of the family here at CLC. But I have had to learn that I.C. stands for Iron City and how to pronounce Yuengling.

- And you thought it was easy to be a pastor....
- Baby Blake takes his first step in his faith journey this morning. I want you to know it's a blessing to baptize your children. In Illinois, I've had teenagers come up to me in the mall and say, "You baptized me." There are babies I baptized who are now married with their own children. They all are near and dear to my heart.
- And so, it's a lovely experience this morning to have Sarah and Brandon hand Blake over to God and to this congregation.
- And, when he's old enough, he will begin to learn some of the stories of our Christian faith in Sunday School. Here, let's thank all our Sunday School teachers for teaching the stories of faith to our children. We could consider this the second step. That we teach the stories of our faith and give our children some initial understanding of the teachings of Jesus....
- We are living in new territory, my friends. More people now check none—no preference—than any other preference when it comes to religion. "No religious preference" tops the Roman Catholic church and all Protestants denominations.
- So, what we will see in the succeeding years are millions of children who have not heard one word from a church about being valuable for just who you are. That God loves them. That they have been adopted as a Child of God. There will just be constant brainwashing that they are only valuable if they own the right phone, wear the right jeans, have the coolest tattoo, are part of the right group of friends. We now know that there is a tipping point where enough time spent on social media leads to depression and anxiety in teens.
- Millions of children will not hear one word about loving your own life, loving one another, caring for the less fortunate, serving your neighbor, loving the outsider, the odd kid, the loner. And do we not think this has something to do with the high rate of teen addiction, suicide, and hopelessness?
- The church has maybe one or two hours a week, if we're lucky, to try and counter this poison.
- We're all a mess, but that's okay because God loves messes. But what if you think being a mess makes you worthless?

- We all need to belong to a healthy faith community to have even a chance of making it through life with a sense of well-being....
- At a certain point in our children's faith journey, we invite them to the Lord's table. Two of our girls celebrate their First Communion this morning: Ryleigh Meinert and Lillie Strongosky. Two special girls. Last week I talked about "look for the helpers." I want to thank Pam Farbacher, who helped Ryleigh and Lillie bake their own loaf of Communion bread this morning. What a lovely thing for her to do for us.
- If Baptism is the sacrament of adoption, then Communion is food for the journey of life.
- Luther stressed that the most important words at the Communion table are "for you." The body of Christ for you, Ryleigh. The body of Christ for you, Lillie.
- If you ever need reassurance that you are loved; if you ever need a reminder that Christ is walking alongside you in life, then just go to any church anywhere and taste the body and blood of Christ.
- After Baptism, the sacrament of adoption and First Communion, food for the family, we have Confirmation.
- This morning, Jacey, Deja, Derek, Raine, Abby, Luke and Savannah affirm their Baptism. And here I'd like to thank Eric Stennett and Lenny Jansen for doing a phenomenal job teaching our Confirmation classes. These men put their hearts and souls into what they do for our teens during confirmation.
- So, Jacey, Deja, Derek, Raine, Abby, Luke and Savannah, you are at the age when you are beginning to make your own choices.
- It's hard to believe, but I was once your age. I was interested in girls, playing in a rock band, being with my friends, and keeping my parents off my back.
- Church was on the list, but not nearly at the top. But I was at worship just about every week until I went off to college because my dad told me that that is who we were as a family. I was always free to go find another family.

- And, until you graduate from high school, I urge you and your parents to make the choice to be here on Sunday morning and for you to choose to be in the youth group.
- In a short period of time, we started a high school class on Sunday morning under the leadership of Steve Slepecki and, a youth group under the leadership of Aaron Jackson and Jade Lane. And it will only get better. And it will get better if you are a part of it.
- **I can guarantee that your life will go better if stay an active part of the congregation.**
- So, a few words about choices.
- One of the scary things about the Lutheran approach to the Christian faith is that we do not tell you what to do. We don't have a lot of rules and a ton of do's and don'ts.
- So, freedom in Christ is both a blessing and a curse. You each have a spirit. You have a soul. You have a mind. You have a body. We trust that you will use all of these in making your choices.
- But you're going to mess up. If possible, though, you want to be able to look yourself in the mirror every morning. If you can't, you chose to do something that has brought you shame. And that's not a good feeling....
- Take a moment, stand up, turn and face the congregation.
- These people are in your corner. Carry them in your heart. Remember them when you are making your choices. Will your choices make them proud? Will they make you proud?
- Just as it's hard to believe I was once your age, it's hard to believe you will one day be my age.
- And when you are my age, you will want to be able to look back on your life and say to yourself, "By and large, I am happy with my choices. If I had to do it all over again, I would do it pretty much the same way." You don't want to get to be my age and have regrets, remorse, and resentments....
- In Baptism, God chose you, adopted you, and pledged to always be in your corner, working for what is best for you. You do the same. Choose what is best for you.

- And keep coming back. Don't disappear from the family. You need us and we need you. Amen.
- SERMON SONG: **HERE FOR YOU** BY NEIL YOUNG