

We're All Family

May 12, 2024

Let us pray,

May the words of our mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord.

In bible study, there's a question that comes up every once in a while...What are we doing here? What is this all this really about?

These committees and reading a really old and difficult book we call the bible, trying to decide what's right, and taking care of the toilets and the painting, fundraising. What is all this? What are we doing? What is church anyway?

Today, we have a group of people who are presenting themselves here. Our baptismal candidate is joining this church today. Our confirmands are committing themselves to be a part of this church today, and our Voluntary Associate Ministers are recommitting themselves to today. After all these years, they still think what's happening here is important.

So, what is all this? From the beginning of Christianity when Jesus himself was baptized in the Jordan River, until this morning, when we baptized our dear little Jack, baptism has been the primary rite of initiation into this thing we call the church.

In the story of Jesus' baptism, we remember, He went to visit his cousin John, and John dipped him in the river. And when he came up out of the water, God's voice said, "This is my child and I love him. This is my child and I love him." That was before he performed any miracles or irritated the government or preached a sermon. *This is my child I love him.*

Baptism, our primary rite of initiation into this thing we call the church, is a celebration of God's love for us as children. God's love for us before we do anything or say anything or accomplish anything. First, and always, we are children of God and we are loved. No matter what. No matter where we go. No matter what we do. No matter what happens to us, God loves us.

Baptism is a celebration and an acknowledgement that we are in God's family. And Jesus ran with that. He went out from there and he lived and he taught. One day, His mum and brothers were waiting to talk to him. People said, "Your mother and brothers are looking for you." *And pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers!'*

He did not say, Mom, I'm working, Mom, I'm fundraising, Mom, I'm writing laws, I'm starting a social movement. He said, "Mom, these people are my family now too."

Jesus' ministry started with the pronouncement that he is a child of God, and he was loved. And the "work" Jesus did, was to expand that family. **And that's what we are doing here. We are being a family.** We at McClure, with all the followers of Jesus, all around the world, are first and most importantly, **A family.** That's who we are, that's what we are, that's what we're doing. We are in the family of God.

Families don't have to agree. They don't have to all be the same. They don't all do the same stuff. But today, Jack, Jonah, Mya, Kathleen, Sheila, Don, Leslie, and Joan, we are all here to say we love you, and we are happy you are a part of this family.

Jack, the newly baptized; his role is to be absolutely surrounded by love, to get to know all the people who love him, to be completely held and protected by the love of God's family.

This goes for little Jack, but also, for all the newly baptized of any age. If you're new to the faith, Baptism is about finding yourself in a place of unconditional love. Hearing that voice from heaven, and from the community, that you are loved.

For our Confirmands today, Jonah, Mya, and Kathleen, you're like the brothers and sisters in the family. You are already baptized, God's beloved children. It's time to grow and explore. Who are you? What are your gifts? What brings you Joy? What ideas do you have? What do you want to learn about?

Most of us here today are in this phase, finding God in the ups and downs of our lives, learning to get along with our siblings, making our way – as Children in God's family. Trying to build our relationships with God, getting to know ourselves, and being a part of this big and incredible family.

And today, we are honouring a few of our Voluntary Associate Ministers here at McClure. Reverends Don, Leslie, Sheila, and Joan. These people have been intentionally walking the Christian Road for a long time. They were baptized. They thought about their spiritual gifts, and gave their energy and their creativity, and dedicated much of their life's work to building the family of God.

Today, we honour them, Spiritually, they are like our parents, we can ask them for help. I know I do. We can rely on them to be there for us because they have been walking with God and found hope and inspiration for their souls. They are standing up here this morning to say they will be there for us as spiritual parents in this family.

Christianity is a family. The United Church is a family, And McClure is a family. And so today, we rejoice that the love of God has brought us all together, and makes us all kin to one another,

Today, my prayer for Jack, Jonah, Mya, Kathleen, Sheila, Don, Leslie, and Joan, is that you know how much you are loved. That each of you know how important you are to us, to our McClure family, and that you continue to grow spiritually into the person that you were created to be.
Amen.

Rev. Emily Carr