

Second Sunday after the Epiphany—Year C

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 36:5-10

I Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

*What a weekend. Yesterday, we celebrated Spencer's life and commended her to God and the communion of saints; and today, we baptize Keaton Richard. The full cycle of life right there, in 24 hours. And the juxtaposition of these two events brings into laser focus exactly what we are doing this morning, and why we could do yesterday at all.*

**Keaton**, this is more than just a quaint, old-timey tradition we're doing; this is as *real* and *deep* as it gets. 30 years ago, **Spencer went down into these baptismal waters**. Just listen to the words we prayed *then*, and will pray *today*, in *the blessing over the water*—“**We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection.**” These mysterious sacred waters *mark the place where everything changes—all of your endings, all of your losses, all of your dying, including the death when your last breath leaves—is swallowed up by Christ, and all of your rising, every resurrection throughout all of your days, including your last crossing over into the communion of saints—is marked through and through with Christ's life, a life that death never could seal away.*

And **Keaton**, that means, that from this day forward, **you are free**. You are **free to live**, you are **free to try**, you are **free to fail**, you are **free to make a thousand mistakes** and **that many more detours**. You are a **marked man**, “**marked as Christ's own forever,**” and no matter what you do, or where you go, or what befalls you, *you are his, forever.*

This **flow of love** that **flows** over you today, it will **carry you** all of your days. *And this whole community vows today to walk with you the whole way*—and let me tell you, they mean it, because they have showed up with **steadfast presence** this last month, and most especially yesterday, when we had to say goodbye to **Spencer**. **This body of Christ, they**—along with your **parents** and **godparents**—**promise to help you “grow into the full stature of Christ” and the power of his love.**

*We promise to help you know your true name*—“**Beloved Son of God in whom God is well-pleased**”—and will help you *discover the beauty of this foundational identity*. We will help you *to know*, as **Isaiah** did, that **you are crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God, and when the times get rough, and you feel forsaken, and it is just desolate, we promise to help you remember that God Delights in You; you are wrapped in a covenant that proclaims with boldness that God won't ever let you go.**

*We promise to help shape you and form you in the way of Jesus*, helping you to grow ever deeper in your **baptismal life**, helping you to **understand** and **claim** and **live these radical vows** that we will proclaim with you in just a few minutes.

*We promise to help you discover your own unique spiritual gifts given to you*, “**This manifestation of the Spirit given to you for the common good,**” as **Paul** says in **I Corinthians**

12. It takes a lifetime to unpack **our particular gifts**, but we are *all* given them, “*each [gift] allotted to each of us just as the Spirit chooses.*”

*We promise to help you move against a culture that can fixate on perfection and purity and scarcity and help you trust in the super abundance that Christ is always inviting us to discover right before our eyes. That story from John’s gospel this morning—180 gallons of water for rites of purification turned into 180 gallons of good wine because it’s a wedding feast, and we have to celebrate, and we’re not just celebrating the union of the couple, but we’re celebrating communion writ large, we’re celebrating our union-with God and with one another and with all of creation.*

While Jesus honors the law, he also spends a lot of time overturning the pieces of it that kept people all bound up feeling unworthy. *A lot in this life will try to tell you that you are not enough and that you don’t measure up, but we will be here to remind you of what we mark today—YOU are beloved, a crown of beauty, a royal diadem in the hand of your God—YOU are more than enough.*

And should you have to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will walk with you there, too. And should we have to commend you to God, *hard though it is*, we will gather and pray you over *reminding ourselves*, as the Burial preface proclaims, “**Life is changed, not ended.**”

Baptism reminds us that **eternal life doesn’t start upon our death; eternal life begins here, now, today**—it starts with **stepping into this dance of death and resurrection**—that *paschal two-step* that we will do our whole lives long, *death and resurrection, death and resurrection, death and resurrection*—it starts with **stepping into this dance, knowing that resurrection will always have the last word**. It starts with **leaping toward life and love and joy, knowing that tears and sorrow will be part of it.**

I don’t know all of what your life will hold, **Keaton**, *but I do know this, it will be full beyond measure. You are sealed, you are marked, you have this community, you have a rule of life and a way to follow, you have a Lord and Savior who will die for you to reveal just how deep love can go—you have everything you need.* Welcome to your eternal life. Amen.

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