

Sunday, May 8 2016

Acts 16: 16-24

John 17:20-26

## Making Disciples Through Baptism

{Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah! Jesus is alive and is worthy of all our praise, joy time and life! And because Jesus is alive we have a church in which we may gather to grow in relationship with the Risen Christ and with each other. Throughout this season of Easter we will focus on the 5 purposes of the church and our focus today is "Go and Make Disciples, Baptising them in the Name of Christ!"}

Since today is Mother's Day, I thought I would begin with a list someone has made which they have called "Murphy's Laws of Parenting." See if you can identify with any of these:

1. The later you stay up, the earlier your child will wake up the next morning.
2. The gooier the food, the more likely it is to end up on the carpet.
3. The longer it takes you to make a meal, the less your child will like it.
4. A sure way to get something done is to tell a child not to do it.
5. For a child to become clean, something else must become dirty.
6. Toys multiply to fill any space available.
7. Yours is always the only child who doesn't behave.
8. If the shoe fits . . . it's expensive.
9. Backing the car out of the driveway causes your child to have to go to the bathroom.
10. No matter the age of the kids—moms are still moms—on duty 24 hours a day, 7days a week with no pay but love!

There is a story about a young, single mom with four children and how difficult it was to get them all ready for church on Sunday. One particular Sunday morning as the children started to complain and squabble, the mom stomped from one room to the other, saying out loud why it was important they go to church as a family and have a good attitude. Suddenly, she noticed all four children huddled together and laughing. The mom asked, "What's so funny?"

"Mom," they said, "every time you slam down your foot, smoke comes out. It must be an evil spirit who acts against God!"

In reality, it was the powder she had sprinkled in her shoes and with her stomping around the powder made smoke rise into her face. The powder in her shoes did the trick, the children got ready reasonably quickly after that and she didn't have to say anything. The evil spirit which came over Mom also became a family story filled with love and laughter. No doubt you have family stories of your own—stories which when you gather together again you only have to share one or two phrases and everyone knows what you're talking about and everyone begins to laugh!

This is also what church families are about. Each church family including Glenwood has its own unique personality, its own history and of course a future as God continues to lead us. As we strive to work towards the vision he has given to us to be the church of today in this neighbourhood and city, we are called to focus on spirit, faith and outreach in the name and love of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the season of Easter we have been recapping the 5 purposes of the church- to worship, to share in the ministry, to tell others of Jesus, to make disciples and to baptize them in the name of God—Father Son and Spirit. As we focus on the fifth purpose we are reminded how Jesus shared with his disciples the Great Commission. In this mission statement are three verbs- go, baptize and teach all of which are part of the command to continue to make disciples.

Why is baptism so important to what we are commissioned to do? It is because the waters of baptism symbolizes fellowship so that one is identified within the body of Christ as a believer and child of God. When children are presented for baptism it is the parents who make promises on their behalf to have and to keep the faith story alive and to share it throughout the child's life. It is the parents' responsibility to teach the stories and to have a community of faith support and encourage their children as they grow in understanding and love of others and of God's love for them.

As Christians we are called to belong not just to believe. We are not meant to live alone but to belong to Christ's family and be members of his church. So when we baptize it is not only a symbol of salvation, it is a symbol of belonging and receiving new life in Christ. In the United Church we celebrate baptism as part of a regular worship service and this shows that the newly baptized is now one of us! We are in this family together. It says in Ephesians 2:19—You are members of

God's very own family and you belong in God's household with every other Christian. The church exists to provide this place for gathering those who believe, to worship so that we may continue to grow and understand what it is that we believe and who God is as He made all things possible.

Our reading from John 17 is part of the prayer Jesus offered to God prior to his arrest and trial and crucifixion. Jesus and the disciples have finished eating the Passover meal. Judas has left the group in order to get the Roman soldiers. Jesus and the disciples have made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane and he knows that it will be soon that He is to be arrested. And so he prays- he prays for himself, he prays for his disciples and he prays for all believers.

It is the prayer that Jesus offers on behalf of all believers that we focus upon in this time. Jesus' prayer includes the words "that all may be one" which are included in the crest of the United Church of Canada and as we have recently learned in the faith statement of the United Church of Christ, USA, with whom we share full communion partnership. That all may be one.

Jesus clarifies the meaning of these words when he continues to pray "just as you are in me and I am in you, Father. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." What Jesus is asking in His prayer is what we often ask in our prayers for others as a church family. That all may be one. That there be no divisions, no squabbles, no hurt, pain or loss. That all may be of one mind and heart and that our united focus is on God's love and grace and mercy and how we share it with one another with peace and joy .

Jesus wants all those who believe to be with him in His glory forever and this glory is what we call heaven. This is the same place that Jesus promises all His believers and followers. A place reserved for the faithful members of God's family- a place for you no matter how old or young, weak or strong. A place where God's love is known and experienced by all and all are one in purpose and response. The family of God where all are one.

On Christian family Sunday we give thanks to God that we are One in Christ and one with each other. We give thanks that little Aubrey now belongs to this amazing family of love where we are all called to be caring and sharing with others. This is the family of God at its best—filled with hearts of love and

worshiping in faith and with hope for not only the time when all shall be one in God's promised heaven, but also as we face every day challenges.

Every day challenges arise in your lives but when you multiply this for all the families within the church family we need to remember that we are one with each other because of Jesus Christ. And it is because we are one—we can pray as the body of Christ and ask God for help, answers, support and encouragement. For this is what we teach and learn about making and being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Just think about this- when someone in our church family dies; or when one of our church family loses a family member even though we may not all know them; when crises occur to sandwich generation adults—looking after parents and children alike; or when children are brought by friends of parents to church because of work commitments or problems in the homes; or even if children or adults are facing the uncertainty of bullying and its issues; when marriages break down and children are involved, or jobs are lost and new positions are found; when expectant parents lose the unborn child, or maybe the illness of teachers leads to death or illnesses of adult parents causing children of any age to wonder about life and death; everything seems compounded and complex yet, all of these things have happened to this family of God and we give thanks for each other and the love that we have in common is because of God.

As a family of God we share in prayer and we have realized what God can do as we strive to care and love each other. And the amazing thing is we want more people to experience this care, love from God and from this community we call our church family. And to do this- we hear Christ's teachings, parables and stories, we listen in awe and wonder about how he healed people, and mostly we learn of his death and resurrection so that we might unite with God and live with him forever. And we do this as a family of God in this place where we have learned to care for each other as we not only consider who we are, but whose we are in faith. We are brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and we are the family of God. Let us listen to Tim McGraw "Humble and Kind" and let us hear his words and offer them in prayer.