

## In Harmony

Wayne Waibel – 01/12/2025

We all belong to families, and with that sense of belonging comes a profound sense of rightness and hopefully what it's like to feel love. That is perhaps the single most fervent desire of a parent for a child – that they will find love. I know for a certainty that the day I brought Stacy home to meet my family was the day my mom stopped worrying about me.

It's an easy analogy to equate the love of a parent for a child with the love of God for His people. While we in no way grasp the breadth and depth of His feelings for us, we nonetheless get a hint for the dynamic at play. In so doing we should be able to understand why He felt it necessary to dwell among us.

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What God is to us may be characterized by how we view authority. For the most part, our leaders display a vast array of less than admirable tendencies. But nature ultimately belongs to God. It is not an arena for human manipulation or domination. We lack the kind of leadership skills necessary – period. Go ahead and try to kid yourself into thinking you can play master of the universe – see what happens.

The kicker that continuously amazes, astounds, and humbles me is that when we look at the world around us – the natural world in all its majesty and glory, we realize that the entirety of creation came to be at the sound of God’s voice. “Let there be light.” And there was light. And it was good.

This same God sent His Son to live among us. God saved us by becoming one of us. The twenty first century church sets this Sunday – the Baptism of Jesus as a day apart from every other in the church calendar. This day signifies the commission of Jesus to the ministry that would ultimately save the world.

Baptism is a life altering, world saving, time honored tradition that achieves a rightness and a trueness that transcends all other actions. And to think that Christ’s cousin John nearly declined to perform the sacrament. He did not feel worthy in the first place, and Jesus had not committed any sin, so why was it even necessary to redeem Him in the second place.

But it needed to happen, and they both knew it. It needed to happen for the establishment of peace on earth, not with violence or the use of overwhelming strength, but through humility, compassion, and endurance. True leadership protects what is weak until it is strong enough to stand.

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Personal interest must not drive the vehicle of authority, and yet we see that principle violated at all levels on a routine basis. We are a hard-hearted people it seems when we reach a certain level of authority. The entire system we've put in place is contrary to the natural order of things. And that includes human nature.

We struggle between what we know is right and what we think we can get away with. Not exactly a recipe for righteousness, is it? Still – doing our best only goes so far unless and until we fully submit to our better selves. That part which is called – not driven - by the inner small voice.

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The story that began within Israel is now the message for the world. And with the Baptism of Jesus, God's story continues. No person is beyond His care and concern.

What makes us worthy is not our individual achievements or the size of our congregational budgets, but God's gracious love. Our faith, generations and centuries later, is as valid as the faith of the first Christians in Jerusalem and Samaria.

The creating and saving acts of God are intimately linked in God's relationship with creation. Creation is a deeply loving act of God; redemption is an event of great sovereign power. Transcendence and immanence coexist in God not in tension - but in harmony.

The Holy Spirit is an inclusive Spirit that fosters fellowship and communication across human boundaries, as evidenced by the fact that at His baptism, Jesus identified with the damaged and broken people who needed God.

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The sacrament of baptism has many levels. At its core is the act of submission. As an infant, you are baptized into the family of faith that will nurture and guide you on your journey. As a confirmand or adult, you are welcomed into the fold and are still supported, but baptism becomes a conscious choice and therefore a life decision made.

There are those who wish the experience over and over again, so it becomes an act of renewal or rebirth, if you will. Infant baptism is probably the most controversial, and the argument against it is generally how can you get a sense of the profound when you are just a child?

It's a fair question, but it's a little like faith in its essence, which is something very personal. It is a covenant between you and your God. I asked my pastor after I had just been confirmed, what happens as I live my life and other dreams grab my attention, what becomes of the promises I made as a confirmand, what if I forget them? He just smiled, winked at me and said, "That's okay, God'll remember."

When we baptize our infant daughters and sons who have no sin, we are likening them to our Savior, who was also baptized even though He had no sin. We are committing ourselves as the guardians of their faith until they are able to do that for themselves. Just as Christ does the heavy lifting for us – time and again.

And we baptize them in the belief that doing so will one day manifest in a joyful, purposeful, peaceful, and noble life spent in the pursuit of that which is good and right. A life that matters. Much as Christ in His own baptism and ministry was characterized by a conscious and consistent submission to those for whom He was living the gospel.

Human existence has its origin not in the accidents of history and biology, but in the will and the intention of the Lord God, creator of heaven and earth, who favored this creation with His loving Son, in whom He was well pleased indeed. Amen.