

The Execution of Authority

Wayne Waibel – 01/11/2026

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.

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 can't possibly grasp the breadth and depth of His feelings for us, we do catch the shift in precedence once we have kids. At the very least, we should be able to understand why He felt it necessary to dwell among us. It was the only way to redeem creation.

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What God is to us can be characterized by how we view authority. For the most part, our leaders disappoint and mystify. True leadership protects what is weak until it is strong enough to stand. Personal interest must never drive the execution of authority. So we are forced to look elsewhere. Fortunately, nature ultimately belongs to God. It is not an arena for human manipulation or domination.

When you look at the world around us – the natural world in all its majesty and glory, remember 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. As an historical, tangible man, Jesus accomplished the salvific acts of the eternal, divine Son of God. God saved us by becoming just like 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 not only the baptism, but 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. All who live on this earth are intended to be in right relationship with God and with one another.

And to think that Christ’s cousin John initially declined to perform the sacrament. He did not feel worthy in the first place, and Christ was sinless, so why was it even necessary to redeem Him in the second place.

But it needed to happen for the establishment of justice to be carried out, not with violence or the use of overriding strength, but through humility, gentleness, reserve, and endurance.

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We're a hard-hearted people it seems when we reach a certain level of authority. It's almost as if 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 the influence we unwittingly buy into. 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 driven by the inner small voice. We have a daunting task as Christians - we are called to be a community capable of forming people with virtue sufficient to witness to God's truth in the world.

Take the words of Isaiah for example. Try hearing today's reading as Jesus did, with your whole heart, and respond as He did, with your whole life. It's no accident that Jesus was fierce in His dependence upon the prophets of antiquity to bring the good news of God's Kingdom to the poor.

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The story that began within Israel is now the message for the world. Peter's sermon in the book of Acts clarifies and illuminates that foundation shattering truth. And with the Baptism of Jesus, God's story continues. No person is beyond His care and concern.

Everyone everywhere through the redemptive actions of Jesus is saved, and the apostle's task was to proclaim that to their last breath. They didn't know it at the time, but the life they were giving up was being replaced, and to a man there was not a moment of hesitation.

So profound was this Jesus of Nazareth that they could not help but to be lifted beyond their fears and doubts by His mere presence – then He spoke, and the entirety of their lives were made complete. To enter into Christian faith is to be at peace, to be made whole.

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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.

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 itself 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 consistent and conscious submission to those for whom He was bringing the gospel. Amen.