

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, August 25, 2020
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“The Perfect Picture of Grace”

READING: Ephesians 2:6-9 – And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

Acts 16:29-34 – The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved – you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his family.

Last Saturday, a week ago, I had a wonderful experience. Having come home to Richville to perform my nephew Brad’s marriage to his wife, Kayla, I was asked by my nephew, John, to baptize his baby daughter, Hazel Rose, and I was asked by my goddaughter, Alyssa, John’s sister, to baptize her newborn son, Winston Leonard. So, on Saturday evening we gathered at St. Michael’s, my home church, to participate in a double baptism of my great-niece and my great-nephew. That was a new experience and a great joy.

What was not new was my appreciation for the beauty and graciousness of infant baptism. Many of our Protestant brethren do not believe infant baptism is appropriate or Biblical. I disagree. I believe the Christian church rightly baptized babies and children right from the start. Look at the story from Acts above. The words “your household”, “all the others in his house”, “all his family”, and “his family” give you the distinct picture that St. Paul did not single out the youngest children in that house from being baptized. When he baptized Dad, he baptized the “whole household”. In Greek the word is “oikos”, which was a word used in contemporary everyday speech to indicate EVERY PERSON UNDER ONE’S ROOF, old AND young.

More importantly, infant baptism is the most beautiful picture of God’s grace. Those two babies last week could not make any promises, take any vows, “give their hearts to Jesus”, or claim his blessing. They had no idea what was going on. The baptism wasn’t so much about them as it was about their heavenly Father who claimed them and named them to be his children for eternity. In that sacrament, the Father, for Jesus’ sake, declared Hazel and Winston to be HIS children. They didn’t earn that. They didn’t deserve that. They had nothing to do with receiving it. It was God’s grace-filled act of love, of his own accord, because of his love, in the name of Jesus.

Obviously, as they grow and mature, those two will be able to respond to God's grace and learn to appreciate the great gift that baptism is. But even then, they will not be able to claim that they "chose to believe" or that they "found Jesus". The passage from Ephesians puts the light on more of God's grace. It says that even our faith is "the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast." Whether it's an infant being baptized or an octogenarian, it is God who gives the gift. It is God who lays claim. It is God who makes the promise that stands for all time. Even if we reject that promise or wander from his grace, Scripture makes clear that when we repent and confess our sins, seeking his mercy once again, our heavenly Father rejoices that we have once again sheltered under the grace of our baptism. His promise of eternal life in Christ is still there, open and waiting for us.

Dr. Martin Luther, lying on his deathbed was heard to murmur, "We are all of us beggars." And, he was right. None of us can claim righteousness of our own apart from Christ. None of us can make a promise, offer a vow, or receive God's grace by our own strength and conviction. But the Holy Spirit, working through Word and water (and, later, bread and wine) brings us into faith and keeps us in that faith through God's grace in Christ Jesus. So, keep those babies coming! Every time we baptize one of them, we see the perfect picture of God's grace and a miracle that transforms a sinful child of man into a forgiven child of God!

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

Saturday, September 19, 5:00 – we are planning a drive-in worship service in place of the usual Saturday night service. You'll be able to park in the lot, see the pastors from your car, and tune in to the service on your FM dial. At the end of the service, Holy Communion will be celebrated and distributed as you drive out the exit past the gym. In this way we hope to give those who have stayed out of the building for five months for fear of COVID the opportunity to safely and meaningfully worship AND RECEIVE COMMUNION. More info will be coming, so stay tuned!