



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

First Sunday in Lent (B) – 1 Peter 3:18-22

Focus: *I am Baptized!*

word of life

“And baptism ... now saves you--not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ...” 1 Peter 3: 21 (NRSV)

Read 1 Peter 3:18-22

The book of 1 Peter was written to “exiles” (1 Peter 1:1) and “aliens” (1 Peter 2:11). These were people who were given only limited legal and social rights. They experienced social discrimination and were viewed as strange or different; and in response to their different-ness with the society in which they lived, they would gather in communities where they would be supported and received with equality and dignity.

1. *Who are the exiles and aliens in our society?*
2. *What communities support and receive them?*

The faith community to which this letter is addressed provided these exiles and aliens social acceptance as well as acceptance by God. Although they were marginalized in society, they were included and incorporated into the community of believers in their baptism. This acceptance gave them strength and courage to face the sufferings and pain of being an outsider.

3. *Should this be a ministry of the church today?*
4. *How might a church reach out to include the marginalized?*

The suffering experienced by the community is acknowledged in the verses prior to today’s reading. “But even if you do suffer for what doing what is right, you are blessed,” the writer proclaims. (1 Peter 3:14 NRSV) The author then reminds the followers of Christ in the verses for today that being a Christian does not insulate one from suffering. Christ, the righteous one, also suffered. His suffering was redemptive – the just Jesus suffered for the unjust, so that the believer is brought to God. This saving grace of Jesus’ suffering is for all people – the familiar and the stranger, the resident and the exile – and for all times.

This once-and-for-all effect of Jesus’ suffering is proclaimed even to “the spirits in prison” who did not obey in the days of Noah (vs. 20). Scholars remain uncertain of the meaning of these verses. Some argue that this is a reference to God’s deliverance through water of Noah and his family in the flood. It is through water – the waters of baptism – that we are joined to Christ and experience God’s saving grace.

5. *What do you think that phrase “spirits in prison” means?*

The baptized follower of Christ is urged to view baptism as the once-and-for-all event and as “an appeal to God for a good conscience” (vs. 21). The word “conscience” might be better translated “a conscious awareness” of the saving power of baptism. For a community of exiles and aliens, ostracized and excluded, to believe that they are accepted and saved through the waters of baptism, might require a conscious awareness beyond what they can conceive. And so there is an appeal to God for a “good conscience” to more fully realize and trust in the saving gift of baptism.

6. *Why appeal to God for a good conscience?*
7. *What is the saving gift of baptism?*

word among us

“I am baptized!” Martin Luther proclaimed this good news daily. When he was challenged for his teachings; when he was exiled from the church; when he experienced suffering, ostracism, and doubt, he would remember, “I am baptized!” The words reminded him that he was joined to Christ – joined in his suffering and in his resurrection.

1. *Why was the phrase “I am baptized!” of such importance to Martin Luther?*
2. *What does that phrase mean for you?*

Baptism was more than a washing away of sin for Luther. “Baptized child of God” was his identity and his foundation of his faith. It was the saving grace of God. It provided him the strength to face the challenges of life.

It is the same for us as well. When we experience suffering, we are reminded in our baptism that we are connected to Jesus who suffered for us. When we face doubt and fear, we are reminded in our baptism that we are not alone. When we feel like a stranger in exile, we are reminded in our baptism who and whose we are; we are reminded that we belong to Christ.

3. *How often do you think about your baptism?*
4. *When have you felt like a stranger in exile? Who welcomed you?*

We, like Luther, need to be reminded of the words from 1 Peter: “And baptism ... now saves you – not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ...” 1 Peter 3: 21 (NRSV)

5. *If someone would ask you to explain what baptism means, how would you respond?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God’s faithful people.

In the affirmation of baptism liturgy, the question is asked, “Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in Holy Baptism?” To say “Yes” to this question is a life-long commitment of faith. It is a promise to grow in our conscious awareness of what God has done for us. It is an affirmation that we belong to God. It is a commitment to live among God’s faithful people and continually seek to grow in our understanding of the faith.

6. *Has your commitment to live among God’s faithful people changed over the years? How so?*
7. *How is your understanding of the faith grown in the past year?*

As those persons affirming their faith turn and face the congregation in the affirmation of baptism liturgy, the gathered community proclaims, “We rejoice with you in the life of baptism. Together we will give thanks and praise to God and proclaim the good news to all the world.” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 236) “I am baptized!” Thanks be to God!

Prayer

We thank you, O God, for your saving grace given to us through our baptism in Christ. Amen

last word

Begin each day with the words,
“I am baptized!”

Daily Faith Practices

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