

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

What amazing love our Father has for us, that, no matter what we've done, he welcomes us to his table, put shoes upon our feet, a fine robe around our shoulders, and a ring upon our finger. There is no end to His compassion and mercy... Friends, believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

***GLORIA PATRI**

The Hymnal #579

Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, World without end. Amen, Amen.

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Ransomed, healed, restored, and forgiven, we may finally be at peace with God. But let us also be at peace with one another and share the peace of Christ. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, liturgist will step into the lectern and say...

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

All that we have in this life is meant to prepare the way for God's faithful into the next, Recognizing that the things of this world are consumed by moth and rust, let us lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings.

The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.

THE OFFERTORY

"There Is a Happy Land" Arr. Dale Wood

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

***DOXOLOGY**

(In Unison)

The Hymnal #592

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;

Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Let us pray...You have loved us into life, O God. When we have faltered, you have helped us to begin again. When we have despaired, you have opened our eyes to a new a living hope. When we have been ill, you have given us people who have showed us the way to health. Wherever we are, you are there also. In gratitude for your presence in our lives, and for the future you have prepared for all who love you, we offer these gifts and ask that you would receive and bless them so that all creation may know your glory through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The liturgist will take a seat until after the baptism.

The Minister will step to the microphone and say, "At this time I would invite the Booth Family to come forward to the baptismal font."

As they come forward the minister will begin speaking.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

(Ava, Addison, and Branton Booth)

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Hear also these words from Holy Scripture:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

The promise is for you, for your children and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls.

The Presentation and Promises

The minister continues:

Obeying the word of our Lord Jesus, and confident of his promises, we baptize those whom God

has called.

In baptism God claims us, and seals us to show that we belong to God.

God frees us from sin and death, uniting us with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection.

By water and the Holy Spirit, we are made members of the church, the body of Christ, and joined to Christ's ministry of love, peace, and justice.

Let us remember with joy our own baptism, as we celebrate this sacrament.

Elder: On behalf of the session, I present Ava, Addison, and Branton Booth, children of Robbie and Amy Booth, to receive the sacrament of Baptism.

The minister then addresses parents presenting children for baptism: Robbie and Amy, do you desire that Ava, Addison, and Branton be baptized?

The parents respond: I do.

The minister continues: Relying on God's grace, do you promise to live the Christian faith, and to teach that faith to your children?

The parents respond: I do.

The minister addresses the family and sponsors:

Do you promise, through prayer and example, to support and encourage them to be faithful Christians?

The sponsors respond: I do.

The minister addresses the congregation: Do you, as members of the church of Jesus Christ, promise to guide and nurture Ava, Addison, and Branton, by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging them to know and follow Christ and to be faithful members of his church?

The people respond: We do.

The minister continues: Through baptism we enter the covenant God has established. Within this covenant God gives us new life, guards us from evil, and nurtures us in love. In embracing that covenant, we choose whom we will serve, by turning from evil and turning to Jesus Christ.

The minister then asks the following questions of the parents of children being presented for baptism.

As God embraces you within the covenant, I ask you to reject sin, to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, and to confess the faith of the church, the faith in which we baptize.

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?

I do.

Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love?

I do.

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love?

I will, with God's help.

Profession of Faith

The minister continues:

With the whole church, let us stand together and confess the faith of the church, the faith in which we baptize, using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed as it is found on page 14 in our Hymnals. Let us say what we believe:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried;

He descended into hell;

The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness

of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Thanksgiving over the Water

Let us pray: We give you thanks, Eternal God, for you nourish and sustain all living things by the gift of water. In the beginning of time, your Spirit moved over the watery chaos, calling forth order and life. In the waters of Jordan Jesus was baptized by John and anointed with your Spirit. By the baptism of his own death and resurrection, Christ set us free from sin and death, and opened the way to eternal life.

We thank you, O God, for the water of baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. From it we are raised to share in his resurrection, through it we are reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Send your Spirit to move over this water that it may be a fountain of deliverance and rebirth. Wash away the sin of all who are cleansed by it.

Raise them to new life, and graft them to the body of Christ. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon them, that they may have power to do your will, and continue forever in the risen life of Christ. Amen.

The Prayer of Dedication and Laying on of Hands

Calling each candidate by his or her Christian (given) name or names only, the minister shall pour or sprinkle water visibly and generously on the candidate's head, or immerse the candidate in the water, while saying:

Ava Grace, child of the covenant, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Addison Kay, child of the covenant, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Branton Thomas, child of the covenant, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The minister lays hands on the head of each person baptized, while saying:

O Lord, uphold Ava, Addison, and Branton by your Holy Spirit. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, that they may continue yours forever. Amen.

Ava, Addison, and Branton, children of the covenant, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism, and marked as Christ's own forever. Amen.

The Welcome

The minister continues:

Ava, Addison, and Branton Booth have been received into the one holy catholic and apostolic church through baptism.

God has made them members of the household of God, to share with us in the priesthood of Christ.

Let us welcome the newest members of Christ's family by remaining seated and singing the hymn, "I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry", #2051 in the *Sing the Faith Hymnal Supplement*. After the service I will ask them to join me at the rear door so that you may welcome each of them into the body of Christ."

The family will return to their seats.

After the hymn, the liturgist will return to the microphone and say...

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson for this morning is taken from the twenty-second chapter of the gospel of Matthew, beginning with the second verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #856 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come.

Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.

The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.'

And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.

Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

The liturgist will return to his seat either on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation. Thank you for your service.

When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our second reading today is taken from Revelation of John, the nineteenth chapter, beginning with the fifth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1084 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

And from the throne came a voice crying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" --for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Leader: ...This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“An Invitation to the Party”

In June of 1990, the Boston Globe's society section included an account of the most unusual wedding banquet the staid old city of Boston had ever seen..

Several weeks before, accompanied by her fiance, a woman went to the Hyatt Hotel in downtown Boston to order what was supposed to be their wedding banquet. They poured over the menu, made selections of china and silver, pointed to the pictures of flower arrangements they liked. They both had expensive tastes and the bill came to \$13,000. After leaving a check for half that amount as a down payment, the couple went home to flip through books of wedding announcements.

The day the announcements were supposed to hit the mailbox, the potential groom got cold feet. "I'm just not sure," he said, "it's a big commitment. Let's think about this a little bit longer." And he dumped his fiancee.

When his angry fiancee returned to the Hyatt to cancel the banquet, the Events Manager could not have been more understanding. "The same thing happened to me, honey," she said and told the story of her own broken engagement. But about the refund, she had bad news. "The contract is binding.

You're only entitled to \$1300 back. You have two options, forfeit the rest of the down payment (thousands of dollars) or go ahead with the banquet. I'm sorry, really I am."

It seemed crazy, but the more the jilted bride thought about it, the more she liked the idea of going ahead with the party. Not a wedding banquet, mind you, but a big blow-out. Ten years before, the same woman had been living in a homeless shelter. She'd gotten back on her feet, found a good job, set aside a sizable nest egg. Now she had this wild notion of using her savings to treat the down and outs of Boston to a night on the town. And so it was in June of 1990 the Hyatt Hotel in downtown Boston hosted a party such as it had never seen before. The hostess changed the menu to boneless chicken in honor of the groom, she said. She sent invitations to rescue missions and homeless shelters.

That warm summer night people who were used to rummaging through trash cans and dining in dumpsters, dined instead on chicken cordon bleu. Hyatt waiters in tuxedos served hors d'oeuvres to senior citizens propped up by crutches and aluminum walkers. Bag ladies, vagrants, and addicts took one night off from the hard life on the sidewalks outside and instead ate chocolate wedding cake and washed it down with champagne while they danced to Big Band melodies late into the night.

So it will be for you who are in Christ. You will find yourselves at the mother of all parties-- the wedding feast of the Lamb. You will drink wine the like of which this earth has never seen. The champagne will never cease to flow and will never intoxicate. You will enjoy a meal that would humble even Bobby Flay or Myron Mixon. You will be served by angels.

You will dance to a heavenly orchestra to music composed by teams like Bacharach and Beethoven, Mozart and Hammerstein while being serenaded by Luciano Pavarotti, Dean Martin, and Michael Jackson.

You will be there at the party which never ends, not because you are important, or beautiful, or a scintillating conversationalist. You will be there because those who were invited originally, have declined to attend. And your host, who knows better than anyone what it is like to be scorned and alone, has ordered his angelic servants to compel you to come.

And when you arrive, he will put sandals on your feet, a robe on your shoulders and his own ring upon your finger, at which time you become, not just a guest, but a member of the family, and the Joy of your host-- and your own-- will never end.

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Love Divine, all loves excelling, call to our remembrance the height and breadth, and depth of your love for each of us. Grant that we may not forget the promises you have made us. Neither let us treat lightly nor fail to understand their consequence of the promises we have made to you. Grow our love for you until it resembles yours for us. May we truly love you for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health till death removes all barriers between us and we take our place at the wedding feast of the Lamb. Maintain in us always the glory we knew at the dawn of our faith in and love for you. Fasten us to truth, fill us with compassion, enliven our hope, that we may rededicate ourselves to calling others to share in the feast.

Be known of us now, we pray, in the bread and the cup. Consuming these elements, may we partake indeed of yourself, so entering our bodies that you take command of our minds and our hearts. Yours by creation, we would also be yours in commitment and service. through Jesus' Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray saying....

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done; On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Invitation

At his last meal with his disciples, our Lord Jesus gave us a way to remember his sacrifice of love for each of us by using bread and wine to represent his body and blood. We who could never save

ourselves, have been saved by the sacrifice of a sinless lamb, the Son of God.

This meal was never intended to be a reward for the worthy, but as a help to the undeserving. This is not our table, but that of our Lord, and He invites all who have need of his strength or his forgiveness to come and receive the meal of grace he has prepared for you.

The Words of Institution

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord took bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying: "Take, eat. This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In like fashion after they had eaten, he took the cup. After he had given thanks, he gave it to his disciples saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, drink ye all of it."

These are the gifts of God for the people of God. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again in final victory.

The Prayer After Receiving

Glory be to you Jesus, our Lord and our God, for feeding our souls with your most blessed Body and Blood. Oh, let your heavenly food transfuse new life and new vigor into our souls that our faith may daily increase; that we may all grow more humble and contrite for our sins; that we may love you and serve you and delight in you, and praise you more fervently, more incessantly, than ever we have done before. Amen.

Would all who are able please stand and join in singing our closing hymn, "Shall We Gather at the River?", printed in your bulletins.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Shall We Gather at the River?"

Shall we gather at the river, where bright angel feet have trod;
With its crystal tide forever flowing by the throne of God? *[Refrain]*

*Yes, we'll gather at the river, the beautiful, the beautiful river;
Gather with the saints at the river that flows by the throne of God.*

On the margin of the river, washing up its silver spray,
We will walk and worship ever, all the happy golden day. *[Refrain]*

Ere we reach the shining river, lay we ev'ry burden down;
Grace our spirits will deliver, and provide a robe & crown. *[Refrain]*

Soon we'll reach the shining river, soon our pilgrimage will cease;
Soon our happy hearts will quiver with the melody of peace. *[Refrain]*

*THE BENEDICTION

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"Go, My Children, Fed and Nourished"

Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me;
Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.
Here my Spirit's power filled you; here His tender comfort stilled you;
Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis