

ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

23 E. Airy Street | Norristown PA 19401 | (610) 272-4092



THE SIGH OF LOVE

The Rev. Andrew F. Kline

Text of a Sermon preached on Trinity Sunday

May 30, 2021

ISAIAH 6:1-8 | CANTICLE - BENEDICTUS ES, DOMINI

ROMANS 8:12-17 | JOHN 3:1-17

“Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.” When Jesus walked among us in the flesh, he constantly showed anyone who was curious, like Nicodemus for instance, what it meant to be born of water and the Spirit.

Jesus was baptized, and heard God's voice declare, "this is my beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Jesus visited with a woman by Jacob's well, and a man born blind, and in each case, through anointed conversation, he made them whole. Like the wind, that blows where it wills, he came and went, and spoke of the path of water that leads to the light, the path that would lead them through the water of their suffering, their shame, to a saving belief in their destiny in him.

These things come in order. Flesh. Water. Spirit. We who are born of the flesh are then born of water. At the moment greater life beckons, each one of us passes through the waters of the womb, the birth canal. And at every moment we feel alive thereafter, we pass through the water, the struggles and suffering of this life looking for the light, longing to feel the wind of God's first breath in us on our faces, moving us to our resting place.

Each one of us lives each day knowing that our destiny is to die. That too is being born of water, being born on the flood, being asked to trust that when Pharaoh's army is behind us, God might just part the sea. If not, we return to that watery grave, that mystery of where we were first conceived.

The spiritually immature often forget water. Nicodemus was no dummy. He was a learned rabbi. But Jesus had to give him a riddle so he would stop and think. You cannot go straight to heaven. You must be born from above, which also means, again. Put it all together, you have to say, you must be born again, from above. Ergo: you must be born of both water and Spirit!

There are no shortcuts. Jesus was born of the flesh of his mother Mary. He was born of water in his baptism, he was born of water through every test and trial he faced, but even more, in his death and resurrection. He was born of the Spirit every time he opened his mouth, when he obeyed his Father's voice, when he loved us to the end, when the wind raised him from the dead. Jesus, by his death and resurrection, was born again.

Today, on this Trinity Sunday, we have baptisms. We also have God's Word that focuses our hearts on the true confession of our faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are celebrating births of water and Spirit, side by side, intertwined, joined together, like one of

those ropes placed near the top of a particularly difficult the summit in the Alps, left there so that we will not miss our way to the top.

For today, we say, God is love. God loves us so much, giving himself for us, he is adopting four new beautiful children into his eternal family, the church, so that we can all make the journey together. As Paul would say, we have won the lottery! God is bringing them and us to the love that exists before all things.

This is the eternal conversation: the Father who begets the Son, the Son who is the Word the Father speaks, and the Spirit who is the Word that sounds, resounds, because the Father and the Son in conversation bring everything into being. The Word that we see is Jesus, in the flesh, in the witness of the gospel story. The Word that we hear, even now, is the Holy Spirit!

Do you hear it?! The wind, the wind. It is the sound of love, finding us, lifting us, moving us together into this divine dance. The Father and the Son behold each other. Their love for each other is so intense it overflows. All things come to be. They speak. There is light, And generation after generation those who are listening hear the breath upon the waters, the sigh, that passes between the Father and Son. For the Holy Spirit is that love that the Father and the Son share with us at this very moment.

The breath that we breath in and out for ourselves, for each other, for the One True God.

The Holy Trinity is not a difficult math problem. It is the language of love. When we confess the Nicene Creed each Sunday, we should learn the words by heart, close our eyes, breath in and breath out, and let the love of the Father and the Son rest upon us, like a dove. “We believe” is the song. As we sing it, we receive what we believe: the holy catholic church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, the communion of the saints and the life ever lasting. These make up the resounding chorus of the ballad of God’s love for us.

“Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.” When Jesus walked among us in the flesh, he constantly showed anyone who was curious, like Nicodemus for instance, what it meant to be born of water and the Spirit.

My heart stops to think that I might have been the one to have ten minutes with Jesus. What would I believe after hearing his voice, hearing his words, listening to him breath that sigh, because I didn't quite get it!

I will tell you a secret. He has said to me, from time to time, on my journey: "Oh, dear friend, forget everything else. You must be born of water and of Spirit. Believe in God. Believe also in me. Confess that I am your Lord and Savior. Receive the Holy Spirit. Walk with me. Put your heart here, on my heart. Listen as I breath in you. We will walk, we will make our way, through these waters together. God so loved the world that he gave me to you, that here, trusting in this heartbeat, you will have eternal life.

Credo. So I believe. From the heart. So we believe. Amen!