

May 13, 2018

7th Sunday of Easter

John 17:6-19 (Year B)

Lutheran Church of Our Father, Greensboro, NC

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! So we have a pretty full service this morning. Blessedly full, I'd say. It's Mothers' Day. We've got a baptism. We've got Confirmation. We're blessing our prayer shawls. And then of course we still have all of our regular parts of worship, including readings, and a gospel lesson and sermon. And so there's a lot going on, but in all of it I think there's a common thread. Because in all these things we see and are reminded of the deep and mighty ways that we are immersed in God's love.

Prayer shawls certainly remind us of this reality. These shawls are stitched together by various people in our congregation. People who in their spare time keep their hands busy, creating something, so that it might be a blessing to others. And so we've gathered all these shawls today so that we might pray our blessing upon them, before they go out to be wrapped around people and serve as a reminder of God's love. So that people who are sick, or in the hospital, or homebound might have a tangible reminder of the promise that Christ gives today, that all who are in God are in Christ, and are protected, and sanctified and entrusted in his care.

And ultimately that's what baptism is about, too. It's not about us doing anything, but rather God's action of choosing to love; choosing to claim us, to call us, to wrap us in God's loving care. Sweet Kyle, as precious as he is, has done nothing to claim God's love. He isn't asking for it. He hasn't earned it, or chosen it. And yet God gives it. God pours out God's love upon him for no other reason than that's what God does. God reaches out, and protects, and loves, and claims people as God's own. Not because Kyle has done anything special that makes him worthy of it. Not because any one of us has done anything to earn it, but simply because God loves us. God chooses to pour out God's love upon us because it's God's nature to do so.

And though we don't do anything to earn it, it's so good that we cannot help but respond to it, which we see perhaps nowhere more clearly than in Emma, Natalie, and Mary today. We've just made promises for Kyle. His parents and grandparents made some, and we all made some others, and frankly, he has the most passive role in it all, because that's how God's love works. It just washes over us. It acts, while we just sit and bask in it. And yet, here today we have three girls who are acting anyway. Three girls who are taking the promises made around them in their baptism, and owning them. Girls who are saying "Amen, let it be so" to the promises that you all made when they were baptized. "Amen, let it be so" to the love that God pours out on them, and wraps them in. A love that is far deeper than any other we could imagine.

And yet we experience it in the love that we share with one another, perhaps nowhere more strongly than in the love we experience with mothers. Who care for and nurture and comfort and form us. Who give of themselves to ensure our safety and protection and are committed to pouring out love upon us, and enfolding us in it. And certainly this is not just our mothers, but all who have been mother figures to us. Every woman who has formed us, who has given of herself to reflect God's love to us, and to nurture us in that love. And all the people, male or female, who have cared for us and raised us and reflected God's love to us. We experience the gifts of God's love best in community. And so it is through one another that we perhaps get the best glimpse of what this love looks like.

And so, I believe, in a lot of ways this morning preaches itself. I don't really think we need a full blown sermon, because God's word is so clearly being proclaimed in every fiber of our worship. In the thanks and admiration showered upon the women who have nurtured and cared and formed us throughout our lives. In the words of promise proclaimed from the font over sweet baby Kyle. In the bold witness that Emma, Natalie, and Mary are about to give. In the warmth of the shawls literally stitched together with love, that surround our table. Every moment of our worship this morning screams the promise of God's love, to the point where there isn't much else to say. We just need to rest in, to breathe it in, and give thanks to God for the ways the it illuminates what it means that Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.