

Pentecost 7 Sermon 7/28/19

This morning we will baptize Rian Marie Rhatigan into the household of God as it is lived in this small community of faith that is St. John's Episcopal Church in Pleasantville, NY.

Just as Joshua asked the Israelites to choose before entering the Promised Land, the choice for Rian parents and Godparents will be to either raise Rian in the awareness of a life, grounded in God; or a life grounded in worldliness. Joshua makes it clear that to choose a life grounded in God is to choose life. Life lived in abundance.

We look at Rian, as we look at all infants, with awe and wonder, for we recognize that she is miraculous. The very fact of her is miraculous. We know that she is spectacularly made and worthy of all the fussing and cooing we offer. Like each of us, Rian will be baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The very breath that created the wonders of the universe, lives and moves and finds being in this infant. And in each of us.

Last Sunday Deacon Lynn and I presented a few arguments for and against Jesus' seeming admonishment of Martha for her worry and distractions. Some may have come away with the thought that we were advocating one way of "being" over another. Nothing could be further from the truth, the core message is that if we are first centered in God, we are free to do the tasks in front of without worry, without distraction; with grace and confidence.

Today, again, Jesus guides us away from worry and distraction toward grace and confidence. In teaching the disciples, and us, to pray, Jesus is reminding us that we too are spectacularly made and worthy.

Let's take a look at Luke's Gospel reading this morning. The Lord's Prayer begins with an acknowledgement of God, praise of God and God's willingness to provide for our sustenance.

"Give us each day our daily bread..."

Yes, God knows we need food, clothing, shelter, invigorating work and re-creation in play. Yes, God knows, that our worry and distraction do nothing to advance the cause. Rest assured that God will indeed see to our need.

"And forgive us our sins as we forgive everyone indebted to us..."

God also knows that despite all the prayers at baptism, most of us are reluctant followers, in need of intentionally choosing to reorient our center toward God, repeatedly. Right now, Rian really only knows her own need, she's hungry, wet, tired or in need of a cuddle and until that need is taken care of, there will be no philosophical discussions of awe and wonder. God know the same is true for us, no matter how many decades we have wondered this life. God asks, however, that as our needs are met, we become more reflective of how we interact with each other. Do we sin? Of course. Do others sin against us? Of course. Does the knowledge of this fact inspire us to be forgiving of one another? That is the question on which we will be judged.

The civility, the kindness, the forgiveness with which we treat each other, is the civility, the kindness, and the forgiveness with which God will treat us.

We are encouraged to be persistent in our prayers, for God will meet our needs, even if it does take a bit of time for the answer to be realized.

And what is it we are to pray for? The bread, already promised? No. The forgiveness, already assured? No. "...how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask!"

We are to pray for the Holy Spirit to fill us and move us; to guide us and keep us.

We will seal Rian by this same Holy Spirit this morning, and mark her as Christ's own forever.

Let us not forget that we too have the blessing of the Spirit the sureness of Christ's care and the steadfastness of God's love. We too are spectacularly made.