

THE FIVE BAPTISMAL PROMISES

When we were baptized, promises were made. Either our parents made them for us, if we were too young to consent or we made them for ourselves, if we were baptized as a young person or adult. Then, on our confirmation day, (also known as affirmation of baptism) we reaffirmed our commitment to living out those baptismal promises in our daily lives. Many of us probably haven't thought about those baptismal promises in years, if at all. So here is a little reminder for us all.

During the worship service, in the sacrament of holy baptism, the pastor asked: **Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism; live among God's faithful people; hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper; proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed; serve all people following the example of Jesus; and strive for justice and peace in all the earth?"**

And we responded: **We do, and ask God to help and guide us.**

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, pg. 236)

Being a disciple of Jesus is about more than just coming to worship once a week. Yes, worship is one of the five promises. In fact, it is the promise that grounds us in God's word and equips us for living out the other four. Many say that for Lutherans it is the center of our life together. However, if we only worship, we miss out on the joy and the challenges of a holistic faith journey.

So, for the next five months, we will take a little time to explore each baptismal promise in order to remind us and encourage us to grow each day in the gift of our resurrection life in Christ.

Exploring the second baptismal promise:

HEAR the Word of God and SHARE in the Lord's Supper.

(From ELCA.org)

For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26 NRSV)

God gives the word and the sacraments to the church and by the power of the Spirit thereby creates and sustains the church among us. (The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament, Principle 2, page 7.)

We listen deeply as we hear, read and study God's word. As God's word speaks to us, it comes both as command and promise. We listen to see how the message challenges us and encourages us in our lives. We listen for God's call and God's guidance. And we listen to the words of the Lord's Supper to remind us that the body of Christ was given for us and the blood of Christ was shed for us.

The Lord's Supper stands at the center of our lives as Christians. In that meal, we receive Jesus' presence into our very bodies. We receive God's gifts of forgiveness of sin, new life and salvation. At the same time, as a community, God makes us into the body of Christ, one with all in every time and place who share this holy meal. We become the body of Christ for the sake of the world. That is, we participate in God's mission. Having been showered with God's gifts, God sends us forth to take that love and compassion out into the world to the lonely, the oppressed, the poor, the hungry, the imprisoned, the angry, and those suffering in mind, body and spirit.

There are many ways we hear God's Word:

- **The public reading of Scripture**
- **Preaching**
- **Bible study, devotional reading and retreats**
- **Partaking in the Sacraments (Holy Communion and Remembrance of Holy Baptism)**
- **Experiencing the Arts (music, visual arts, dance that point us to God)**
- **Confession and Forgiveness**
- **Prayer and contemplative practices (silence, Lectio divina, centering prayer, meditation)**
- **Continue the fellowship of the Lord's Supper through meal time prayer at the dinner table**

I encourage you to take time this month to reflect on this second baptismal promise. Try out some of the practical ways of **HEARING AND SHARING**. We live in a world full of noise that can challenge our ability to hear and listen to God. In order to focus on God's word and listen for God's calling on our lives, we need to be intentional. One way to be intentional is to embrace daily disciplines that help us listen for and focus on God's presence and God's work in our midst. Some of those disciplines have been entrusted to the church so that we have the assurance that God's word, spoken and eaten, will always be available to us. Worship provides us the opportunity to receive God's word on an ongoing basis. There are also other disciplines that can be practiced individually or, perhaps more beneficially, in small groups. These can provide us ways to speak **TO** God, listen **FOR** God, and simply rest **IN** God. May you find ways to strengthen your connection to God through these means of grace. God is good! All the time!

Peace to you as you seek new ways to "hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper!"

Pastor Sharon Taylor