

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.

EXPLORING THE FIFTH BAPTISMAL PROMISE: STRIVE FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE IN ALL THE EARTH

(From ELCA.org)

We celebrate the abundant blessings that are a part of this world. But we also walk in the struggle of human existence where we face our own sin, our self-centeredness, and the collective sin of human institutions, for example, the church,

governments, the nations. In this struggle however, we meet the suffering God who bears the sins of the world and sends us out, as ones who are joined in the crucified Christ and in his solidarity with the pain of the world. As believers in Christ we are called to be about the work of justice in our personal and public life. We recognize that God's justice is something deeper and purer than our own best understanding of justice. And yet, we are called to love our neighbor as we would love ourselves.

(From Pastor Sharon)

I encourage you to take time this month to reflect on this fifth baptismal promise. Working for justice and peace is not a political statement. It is a faith statement. Following the example of Jesus is our call. In his life and ministry, Jesus acknowledged and advocated for the dignity of all people. He crossed

religious, racial, and socio-economic barriers in order to meet each person with compassion and respect. As I read Scripture, I hear an overarching theme of justice from Genesis through Revelation. I see a Jesus who is more concerned about his responsibilities than his rights. In fact, in the beautiful hymn in Philippians 2 we hear:

3Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form,

8he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross.

Jesus, who has the right to all heaven and earth, emptied himself in order to bring abundant life into the world for everyone.

As we work for justice and peace, we follow the way of Jesus. It is a natural response to our faith and our relationship with the God of Love and Life. As we seek justice, we feed, clothe, support, and help our neighbors. However, we don't stop there. First we feed those who are hungry, and then we ask the hard questions. We ask why we live in a world where people are hungry, and we seek to affect the systems that keep all people from receiving what they need. Disciples in the early Jesus movement did it. They pooled their resources and distributed them to each as was needed.

Working for justice and peace is part of our baptismal call. It is as important as the other four baptismal promises we have discussed over these last several months.

In this day and age, however, it takes courage and commitment to do justice work.

As disciples, we must be undeterred by those who tell us that this work is political and thus should not be the work of the church. This work is a faithful response to the love and grace we have received from God and a faithful response to the gift of baptism.

How are you currently striving for justice and peace in all the earth?

What are some injustices that speak to your heart and evoke compassion in you?

Is there something you can do to learn about these injustices and respond?

Remember, you are not alone in this task. As a faith community, we are part of Christ's body in the world. We are united and strengthened by the Risen Jesus himself as we seek a better world for all.

Peace to you.

Pastor Sharon Taylor