



Pastor Hanke's Blog

January 13, 2019

Will You Baptize Me?

Will You Do My Funeral?

Bible Reference: Luke 3:15-22

In Seminary, I felt like there was a specific protocol on how to do baptisms, funerals, and other types of events. Ideally, you wanted these events to be for faithful members of your congregation, but if that wasn't the case, you were expected to consult your elders. Now, enter into an unchurched culture and things get messy real fast. For example, how often does a member have to attend to be considered a "faithful" member?

In these recent weeks since Christmas, I have led three funerals, and one of them was for four people. Being transparent, not one of them was a member of Mt. Calvary, but rather family members of long-time members of Mt. Calvary. In theory, funerals of members are easier to prepare for because you have known them for years, are familiar with their families and have heard their stories. But tackling the funeral of someone you sort of know puts pressure on the Pastor to "do them justice," so to speak. I feel that pressure especially because I always try to communicate how the Holy Spirit had uniquely gifted that person to love. I say "in theory" because a long time ago when someone I had known for years passed away, I was shocked to hear stories about this person I never knew. It just goes to show that sometimes we don't know someone as well as we think we do, and that perhaps we get the fullest picture of that person in their passing.

The last several weeks have been a wild ride. No Seminary class would have prepared me on how to do the funeral for people who have been murdered. Through this time, though, I saw the amazing hand of God at work. I loved hearing the stories, stories like that of Charles, a long-time faithful husband, who made lamps for people, and of Darlene being a neonatal nurse. I loved hearing the stories of how Jane had the habit of leaving things at friends' houses and that they would make a "Jane box" for all those left items, or how she would drop everything to help a friend. I loved hearing how Zoe wouldn't let anyone bully her friends, and how Jonathan loved babies. I loved hearing how Kate would never let anyone dwell in disaster. One of my favorite stories was from the neighbor who watched the horrific scene unfold at the end of his drive way. He asked God what he was supposed to do now, and he felt God leading him to attend the funeral. The neighbor tried to shake it off, but in the in the end, he followed God's nudge. Now he feels led to teach his own kids Zoe's newest word—kindful—and Jon's newest language interest—Russian. Jesus used the passing of a 10-year-old and an 8-year-old to touch a grown man.

John the Baptist's job in the Bible was pretty straight forward. He was supposed to prepare the way for Jesus to come, and he was doing that by calling people to repentance and baptizing them. Then Jesus showed up and said to John, "Baptize me." Can you imagine how John felt? Maybe he thought: *Um, God this wasn't the deal. You are not following protocol. I was just supposed to prepare the way. I think You are confused here. You don't need to be baptized. You are sinless, remember. That is the whole point of You coming.* John the Baptist didn't have any seminary class on baptizing Jesus, and I don't think He would have wanted to know that was going to happen anyway. It had to be a surprise. But God equipped John, who He called, to baptize Jesus and set in motion the ministry of Jesus, the Messiah!

I will never forget this week and the many people who prayed for me, who told me to be bold and trust the words the Holy Spirit gives me, or who reminded me how Jesus equips the called. It is only by the Holy Spirit's unique methods of equipping us that we are prepared for the unthinkable. I know you have things that God puts in front of you that seem overwhelming. But remember, Jesus equips the called! You will be surprised how He prepares you, like He did with John, for something you never thought could or would happen. We are still in Epiphany. Last week the Magi were called and equipped, and this week John the Baptist is called and equipped. How are you being called and equipped to serve this year?

God's Peace,

Pastor Will