

The Story of Divine Love

Ephesians 1:3-14

August 7, 2011

Through baptism, God tells us the story of _____
_____.

5 C's that summarize this story:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

The story of divine love, not the story of _____ love.

We understand baptism and communion to be
_____ not _____.

Ordinance:

Sacrament:

Baptism is first about _____ claiming _____.

The sacraments do call for human _____.

In the baptism today, the community of faith will promise to:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Prayer Concerns:

Monday: Read the UMC liturgy of the baptismal covenant. (Hymnal p. 32 or check our website for a link to umc.org)

* How is baptism defined, according to this liturgy? What vows are made by each of the participants? What are the stories of God's salvation that are mentioned in the thanksgiving over the water?

* Do you remember your baptism? Do you have any photos of that day? Ask a parent or someone who was present to tell you the story of that day. Say a prayer thanking God for keeping God's promise to you and never leaving you.

* Who have you seen baptized in the church over the last few years? Have you prayed for them? List the names here and pray for them this week.

* At the end of the liturgy, we all renew our covenant to participate faithfully in the ministries of the church by our prayer, our presence, our gifts, and our service, that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Do you participate faithfully in all of these ministries of the church? How might God be calling you to greater obedience and faithfulness?

Tuesday: Read Ephesians 4:1-6

Many of the churches in the New Testament faced the same problems that churches face today. We get the sense that the church is always stirred up by those who have their own agenda, who are arrogant, who expect others to follow their way or do what they want. Ephesians in particular seems to be addressing a group of people who have experienced division within their body. Notice how many times the word "one" is used!

* Are you leading a life worthy of the call God has placed on you? How do you live your profession as a call from God?

* What does unity look like, for the author of this passage? What do you think unity looks like in the church, in the family, in the community? How are you contributing to the unity instead of division?

Wednesday: Read Romans 6:1-4

In this passage, Paul uses the image/metaphor of dying and rising with Christ. This image is conveyed strongly when persons are baptized by being immersed (or dunked) in water. Going down into the water symbolizes being buried with Christ and coming up out of the water is symbolic of resurrection and the new life offered by Christ.

* When in your life have you experienced the newness of life offered by Jesus? When you started to follow Jesus, did you experience the “burial” of your old self, old ways, old habits?

Thursday: Read the UMC Service of Word and Table (or Communion liturgy) (Hymnal p. 6 or check our website for a link to umc.org)

* What are the stories of God’s salvation that are mentioned in the great thanksgiving? Do you see the 5 C’s?

* What kind of attitude is conveyed by the words of this prayer?

* Look at the closing prayer. Write it down and put it somewhere that you will see it, pray it, and memorize it. How do you, in the strength of the Spirit, give yourself for others, especially for those who are outcast, lost, or ungrateful?

Friday: Read Exodus 13:3-10

At this moment, Moses had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, but they had not yet crossed through the sea. God calls the people to *remember* and to *tell their children* what God has done for them. If you read through the Bible, you will see this call again and again: remember what God has done, how God has saved you, how God has delivered you, and tell your children.

*Can you remember a time when God has delivered or saved you? When was the last time you told someone this story? Have you told your children?

* How are we telling our children the stories of God's saving and delivering work? How are you participating in this crucial work of the church?

Saturday: Matthew 26:14-30

On the night before he is crucified, Jesus shares a last Passover meal with his disciples. Notice that Judas is a part of this meal. Judas has already decided to betray Jesus and hand him over to the authorities. Jesus knows this. And yet, as Jesus takes, blesses, breaks, and shares the bread with the disciples, he includes Judas in this act of grace. As Jesus shares the cup, it is given also to Judas.

* Why do you think that Jesus included Judas in this act of grace during the meal? What can we learn about forgiveness and inclusion by this act of Jesus?

*Who do you need to forgive and seek to reconcile with before our next celebration of the Lord's Supper?

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