

Sunday, June 28, 2015
At Silver Lake
Rev. Diane Monti-Catania

Sermon – " Baptized, Blessed and Beloved"

Baptized, Blessed and Beloved

These are the words that describe a Christian community.

When we commit ourselves to following Christ we take on the responsibility of viewing each and every person we meet as baptized, blessed and beloved.

Baptized really means welcomed into God's family.

It is a ritual that acknowledges each and every created being as a child of God.

Baptism, as a sacrament in our tradition, is an opportunity to receive God's grace – though the opportunity is not limited only to those who profess their faith.

Both of the life-transforming miracles we heard about in this morning's readings were granted to people outside of Jesus' community of faith.

Baptized, blessed and beloved applies to all.

To bless someone is to wish them well, to offer hope, to notice their need for your attention, your compassion.

Blessing is an action. Blessing is a verb. Compassion requires action. To show compassion to a fellow person means to put yourself in their shoes — to feel their pain and sorrow as deeply as they do and care for them.

Compassion is different from empathy because it calls us to stop what we are doing, put down our plan for the day, step out of our busy-ness, and meet someone else's needs. Jesus stopped, and looked at the crowd and asked "Who touched me?"

This is a story not just about the faith and determination of one woman, but also about the power of trusting in the one who has the power to heal.

Trusting in the one who can transform lives, who can end 12 years of suffering in a moment, with a blessing.

By calling the woman 'daughter' Jesus signifies to the crowd that this woman who has lived and suffered on the margins, as an untouchable being, is in fact part of God's family – God's daughter.

Blessing means acknowledging the divinity in each child of God.

Beloved – a word, an adjective that the dictionary defines as dear, loved, valued, prized, dearest, sweet, admired, treasured, precious, darling, worshipped, adored, cherished, revered.

Who wouldn't want to feel that?!

Who wouldn't want to help other people feel that?

This, my friends is what we are called to do. We are called to show up in people's lives and offer the gift of ourselves.

We are called to stop what we are doing and notice what our neighbor needs – and act on it.

When people tell me they don't feel like coming to church, my most common response is "what if someone needs you?"

What if someone needs you?

This week, as we welcome our young friends to Silver Lake we will have an opportunity to live our faith.

This is not limited to those of us who will be here this week.

I am quite certain that those of you who will not be here will find multiple opportunities to offer a blessing – to help someone feel beloved.

I want to challenge you to do this in the week ahead.

Go out and be a blessing to someone.

We all feel happy and joyful when a baby is baptized.

Avery gives us reason to smile.

But what about the people who grow a tad less lovable as they get older?

What about the people we don't like, or maybe even secretly hate?

How can we go about being a blessing to those folks?

Emily Holladay reflected on this in her weekly devotional:

The words of the hymn, "They'll know we are Christians by our love," are so hauntingly beautiful, but do you ever wonder if they ring true for us?

A woman so riddled with pain that not a single doctor could care for her once pushed her way through a crowd, releasing every last bit of energy left inside her aching body just to touch the cloak of the One she knew only by rumors of his love and compassion. Instantly, upon a single touch, her pain ceased and she was healed.

This woman didn't know Jesus. She only heard stories of a man who healed the sick, fed the hungry, and looked on every person with compassion.

Do people know this about you and me?

Would anyone today push their way through a crowd to find a Christian to help them?

Someone needs you today.

Will they know where to find you?

Open your eyes. Listen. Respond.

“And they’ll know we are Christians by our love...”

Jesus said it is easy to love those who love you, but the challenge is in loving those you consider your enemies.

This week, think about who you are challenged to love and reflect on what form of blessing they might need from you.

What might you be able to do this week that would have the impact of touching Jesus’ cloak?

Let us commit to living lives modeled after Christ – lives in which we encounter each person as baptized, blessed and beloved.