**Remembering Our Baptisms**

November 2, 2024

Rev. Christine E. Burns

(On the occasion of Leona Christine Estey’s baptism)

*“And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”* Mark 1:11

Today we had the joy of welcoming dear Leona into the family of Christ here at West Parish through the waters of baptism.

She is named and claimed by God. I asked her parents, by what name shall this child be known? She is called Leona Christine Estey. What a powerful name of the love and lineage of matriarchs and the power of a lioness. Leona is the middle name of Becky’s mom who is no longer alive and is deeply missed. She lives on in the newest Leona with her fierce, independent streak and adventurous personality. She is also named after Chris Haven, her other grandmother who we all know and love so deeply here at West Parish. We know that with a grandmother who loves her as Chris does, she will always have her to rely on.

Leona is a deeply desired and loved child. Cassie and Becky fought for her and worked very hard to bring her into the world and we here at West Parish promise our love, support and care. I am reminded of the beautiful song on becoming a mother written by Brandi Carlisle about the birth of her first child, Evangeline. I love some the lyrics that capture what it means to be transformed forever by becoming a mother.

“Welcome to the end of being alone inside your mind  
You are tethered to another, and you're worried all the time  
You always knew the melody, but you never heard it rhyme

You are not an accident where no one thought it through  
The world has stood against us, made us mean to fight for you  
And when we chose your name, we knew that you'd fight the power too

You're nothing short of magical and beautiful to me[[1]](#footnote-1)

We know that Leona is magical to not only her mamas, but also to all of us here. We are so grateful that she is here and teaching us all how to be better people.

We as a church know that parenting and raising children as they grow is a big job and no one should have to do it alone. Cassie and Becky are blessed with grandparents who really step up in huge ways to help assist in raising Griffin and Leona.

We are grateful for the nurturing love and care they receive at preschool several days a week right here at West Parish Family School. Each week she grows and sometimes I cannot believe what she’s up to next as she runs and marches across the grounds.

What does it mean to remember our baptisms? At Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River, Jesus appears before John the Baptist and the heavens opened, the Spirit descends, and God speaks! The heavens could not contain the pure Gospel love of God, and it spilled out everywhere.

God says, “This is my Son, with whom I am well pleased.” God says this before Jesus has done anything in his public ministry. Jesus did not have to earn it because he prayed all the time or read the Torah or healed the lepers. As far as we know, he hadn’t done anything in his public ministry. God calls him beloved because God loves Jesus, just as he is. He was born and grew and is loved by God. He is Beloved.

As we witnessed when Leona was baptized and as we think back to our children or other children’s baptism, we are also reminded that we are also BELOVED. By the waters of our baptism, whether it was a sprinkle as an infant or a full immersion later in our life, your baptism was an act of God acted out upon you. “In baptism,” writes Will Willimon, “the recipient of baptism is just that—recipient. You cannot very well do your own baptism. It is done to you, for you.”7 It’s an adoption, not an interview.”[[2]](#footnote-2) You cannot fail your baptism. You are blessed and loved, chosen by God.

Nadia Bolz-Weber tells this beautiful story about being the Beloved that rings especially true for any of us who have woken up in the morning and wondered, is this all? Am I loved? Does my life matter? Nadia is a huge proponent of AA and how it has saved her life. She begins, “I was in a 12-step meeting the other day when one of the old guys, a guy who has been sober for like, 45 years said something so simple and so casual but something that made me shake my head and wonder what it would be like if we all really believed it.  As we were all discussing what our “higher power” is like, what the “God of our understanding” is like, he said “I don’t know about you, but my God is crazy about me”.

I couldn’t stop thinking about that. For most of my life I’ve heard the saying “God loves you”.  But it always feels more like an empty slogan like, don’t worry, be happy, or something. For someone to say, Nadia, God loves you, feels almost compulsory. Like God loves me kinda because he has to since I’m one of his kids.  But to say my God is crazy about me. I don't know.  That’s different.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

God is crazy about each of you. Do not believe the lies that you are not enough. You are worthy. You belong. God calls you by name. God calls you Beloved.

When you look in the mirror as you wash your face in the morning or at night, whisper to yourself, I am loved. Remember that you are God’s beloved child. May you feel surrounded by this name wherever you journey. Whisper it over and over, especially when you feel lost; saying I am beloved. God loves me and accompanies me through all times, especially the wilderness times. And God, God is crazy about you! Amen.

1. <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=lyrics+to+the+mother+by+brandi+carlisle&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **Rachel Held Evans,**[**Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church**](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/42042272) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://thecorners.substack.com/p/baptism-of-our-lord> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)