

Nov. 19, 2023

Pr. Steve

Texts: Deuteronomy 8:7-18; 2 Corinthians 9: 6-9; Luke 17: 20-21

In the name of God, Abba-Imma, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

*The End Times.* People just love this, don't they? Ever since the days of Jesus—when's it going to happen? It's over here. It's over there. Be afraid! Hyperventilate! We love it! It's like a bad horror film.

And Jesus says, 'You're delusional. Nobody knows—and it doesn't matter.' What matters is the spirit within you—the spirit among you that matters. "*What you sow, you will reap.*"

At Jesus' baptism, the heavens opened, the Spirit descended, and a voice was heard, "*This is my Beloved.*" Water and the Spirit is an ancient Jewish symbol for the creation of God. That's the image—how it all began, through water and the Spirit.

*Ruach* is the Hebrew name for that Spirit, the very Spirit of creation, and creationing. The *Ruach* hovered over the waters of the abyss like a great bird, wing tips outstretched, vibrating over the nestlings, summoning them to life.

That's the Creation Story. It's how we got here. Over the abyss, out of nothing, called to life. Baptism is creating humanity anew. It is creating a 'New Humanity' through that spirit of God, which means—our future is open. Can you believe that in times like this? Our future is open. Disaster is not inevitable because the Spirit is in you, is among us.

How shall we respond? What will we sow? We get to change if we want. We can change our lives our choices. We can change the future if we commit ourselves to it. The choice is before us. Do not sow sparingly—otherwise we reap sparingly.

Austin [baby just baptized] is a miracle—just in case you didn't notice yet. He has been summoned into life with us. He's been called into life because we need him. God knows we need him.

What he shall become not even Danielle, and Kevin, and Mike, and Lori—not even great-grandma Lois and great-grandpa Bob—know what he shall become. But he's been baptized this day so that he will know for a lifetime that he is always of God, and he belongs to God. And the deepest part of his soul and being is forever beloved by God—even when life tries to take him down. Down deep he's beloved, like us, by God. Put your fist over your heart. Very gently you say to yourself, "*I am so loved.*" Come on, everybody. "*I am so loved. I am so loved by God.*" We'll never reach the limit of that love.

Thanksgiving this week. Thank God! We really need it this year, don't we?

Thanksgiving—imagine if all of our children—Austin, little ones, Noah, new ones, fresh ones—all of them were being raised in a culture of gratitude. Imagine that for just a moment, raised in a culture of gratitude knowing that everything they need for this life will be given them through the spirit of God, for the very Spirit of creation. Everything you need, young ones, will be present for you, and through the gifts of the earth and its abundance. everything we need is available.

Growing up in a world like that, that culture of gratitude would create an ethic of fullness, and contentment, and joy. Wouldn't it? Wouldn't it? Instead, our society (and our economy) tells us from a young age, *'It's all empty out there. You don't stand a chance. You're gonna need more. You need, you need, you need a lot more! You've got to get more. How will you get more? Go shopping.'*

For the children's sake, isn't it time we choose to create a culture of gratitude? That is precisely what our ancestors said in this Deuteronomy passage for today, so stunningly beautiful, friends. Remember, especially when life is going well, remember who you are, and how you got here. Remember because it is through gratitude that our eyes are opened. It is through gratitude that our hearts become clear, and we remember who we are, and whose we are, and *we remember to walk humbly with our God.*

The ancient Greek name for this meal which we celebrate today is Eucharist, which means thanksgiving. Here it is not once a year. Week, after week, after week, after week—thanksgiving, and gratitude, and joy, and hope, and mercy, and love, and everything you need—and that Austin needs—to become a human being come to life. Every now and then, you notice during the week sometimes, you get that tampered down a little bit. Anybody had that experience recently? Come to life!

Yeah, Thanksgiving. Can we agree this week to be grateful for everything we've been given—including Austin?

Amen.

The peace which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.