

I have to admit: When I hear those beautiful beatitudes from Jesus' sermon on the mount, and we sing that beautiful setting of those words, and I'm called on to **rejoice and be glad**...I want it. I want to be **blessed** just like Jesus says. I mean, don't we all want...**comfort**...and **an inheritance**... and **to be filled**... and **to receive mercy**... and **to see God**... and **to be [part of his family]**... and **to receive [a] reward in heaven**. (Matthew 5:3-12) That would be awesome! That would be...truly...**blessed!**

OK, so in order to get all of that, whose ready with me, to be **poor in spirit**...**to mourn** a loved one...**to be gentle and thirst for righteousness** (not just think it's a good idea from time to time, but you know, get after it...all the time)...**to be merciful** even when we're angry and hurt and they clearly don't deserve it...and I could go on and on. But do you see where I'm going with all of this? Maybe the trophies aren't worth the troubles, huh?

Of course, that's not how it works, is it? No, that day on the grassy hillside, Jesus wasn't laying out a formula that, if we follow it just right, well we can get everything we want. No, he was giving the assurance that, by grace from him, through faith in him, all of it – all of it - is ours **because of him**, just as Paul wrote about it to the Corinthians in our second reading for today: **because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us the wisdom from God, namely, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.** <sup>31</sup>**God did this so that, just as it is written, "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."** And as we consider *these* beautiful words...

We love to baptize babies and adults. We love being part of the miracle that brings

all that Jesus Christ did on the cross into the life of an individual, like last Sunday when Ezra Williams was baptized. When we baptize adults, they have confessed their sinful and unbelieving past, and we all understand. Yet when we baptize babies, we do so by faith and not so much by sight. As the child is brought by adoring parents and witnesses, all dressed up for the occasion, it's hardly possible for human eyesight to perceive from the physical evidence that the child is sinful and in need of redemption. The pretty eyes, the seemingly innocent face, the tenderness of infancy—all seem to tell us that we surely must be mistaken if we think there's any sin here. Then Holy Scripture weighs in and reminds us that the child is carrying a terrible heredity, the sinfulness of parents all the way back to Adam and Eve. The child needs a new start, a new birth. And so we baptize, so that we can forever tell the child of the difference God had made by bringing the little one into the family, the church.

Paul talks about this essential change in us in our text for today. He wants us to look at who we were. And then to look at who we are now in Christ. And so that's exactly what we're going to do this morning for the next few minutes. We're going to look at, what you could call The Great Transformation.

The young Henry Ford found that his first automobile, the quadracycle, was too big to go out the door of the shed in which he'd built it. So he took a hatchet, chopped out part of the doorway, and brought the auto out for a road test. *I've waited long enough*, he said. At that moment, things became redefined. The shed, which had sheltered and housed the quadracycle, was no longer first in importance—the automobile was. Everything else, including the doorway and the building, was now secondary.

When God called you in Baptism and the Word, he made something new that superceded everything else you were. What were we? Anything but desirable. What Paul says about the Corinthians applies to us as well. <sup>26</sup> *...consider your call, brothers. Not many of you were wise from a human point of view, not many were powerful, and not many were born with high status.* And as I look around here today I don't see anyone who's greatness is known worldwide, statewide, or even citywide. No, as the world counts desirability, we aren't desirable.

But even more important is that we're not desirable to God. Now remember, God hates sin. So much so that he won't, he can't, tolerate it in his presence. And anyone who tries to stand before God with sin on them, not only isn't desirable to God, but is an enemy of God. Did you hear that right? An enemy!

And as I said earlier, we are all born carrying the sinfulness of our first parents. That makes us God's enemies from the moment we are conceived. For that sinfulness hates God, wants nothing to do with God, wants always to do the opposite of what God wants. Yet for some unexplainable reason, though we were enemies, God loved us and wanted us to be with him forever. And in order for that to happen, we had to be washed clean of our sins. We had to be transformed from enemies into children, from sinners into saints. And since we wouldn't do this ourselves, since we couldn't do this ourselves, he had to take matters into his own hands.

And so he came to earth, and he came to a cross. He took all these matters we call sins into his own hands as nails were driven in. And he took these matters into his feet and his side. He, the sinless, all powerful Son, became the dying Servant, taking to his grave, every sin ever

committed by you or me, along with those of everyone in the whole world.

Paul says, *Think of who you were.* But now none of that matters. For with Jesus Christ and his forgiveness in our lives, everything we once were is secondary and serves that which is most important. Henry Ford was part of a revolution that ushered in a new century. What Jesus has done is a more powerful revolution, ushering in an eternal life now and forever with him. And he gives us this eternal life, he gives us this forgiveness, he gives us his payment for sins, he transforms us from enemies into children, from sinners into saints, through baptism.

For in baptism, you and I, the ones lost in sin, the lowly and despised, were given Jesus' forgiveness and holiness. In your baptism, he declared you to be no longer guilty. In your baptism, he made it possible for you to stand before God without sin. In your baptism, he became your wisdom, as Paul says: <sup>30</sup> *because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us the wisdom from God, namely, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.*

Think of the difference between how you were and how you are now in Christ! Think of that Great Transformation! You have been released from the stranglehold of your sin. You have been delivered from worry over your final end and from all the worries between now and then. Yes, you will still fight daily with the struggles of the flesh. But you will not fight as scared or hopeless people who have no sense of strength. You will fight with the strength of Christ's victorious death and resurrection, given to you at your baptism. **AMEN.**