

Grace Church in Scarborough

First Sunday of Advent

17 November 2011

The Baptism of Syncere and Jordyn

Today we bring Jordyn and Syncere in to the New Life of Christ. Baptism is like a new birthing. The first birthing is into the life that everyone shares. The second is into the life of those who live inside the Kingdom of Heaven. Life in Christ is that action, that intentional living, which works to make the Kingdom of Heaven real in the midst of this regular world that we live in.

So, What is the Kingdom of Heaven?

I was at the Diocesan Synod, the big meeting of all the Anglican Churches in Toronto. People were talking about this.

Someone said,

“When you look around, global or local, does it feel right?”

Does it?

You don't need training for this. Does it feel right to see people sleeping on the street where luxury yachts are harboured nearby? Does it feel right to know that one country spends millions a week on armaments and another country cannot get enough food to stop it's people starving? Does it feel right to know that there are old people living alone and isolated without friends or family to visit them, forgotten souls?

You could add to the list, I think.

God has already put into us a sense of what is not right. When a child says to an adult, “That's not fair!” they are usually right.

And God has already put into us a vision of what is good and holy and whole, or well made.

It is around words like, Justice or Fairness, Peace and Harmony, Truth, Faith and Hope. It is about Light and Freedom and good loving families and the beauty of the first light of the day breaking with promise.

People at the Synod said that the job of the Church is to sit in between what we feel is not right with the world, and what we feel is the vision of goodness, holiness and the way things should be. This is the vision of the Kingdom of heaven.

The Church should get mad and sad about all that is wrong. We should be indignant (a great word!). And we should be communities of Hope and Compassion.

Now all of this actually sounds like there should be some rules of engagement, some laws, and there are quite a few hanging around. But it really only gets going with any

umph when the church is made up of people who have really grasped the central truth of the Life of Christ. It is this:

*You are loved,
Loved by God, without any hesitation,
Without any condition,
Without having earned or deserved it.
You are loved because God has decided you are marvelous in his eyes.
Even with all the crummy things you know about yourself that he knows too.
You are loved.*

Taking that right in, past the words, past thinking about it, past your brain and deep into the centre of your soul, that is called believing, or receiving the Gospel. And it changes your life inside.

The second truth of the Life of Christ is this:

*God loves other people this way too.
In fact, this is how God looks on hockey stars and derelicts,
On hookers and on clergy
On the child dying of thirst in Dafur and the couple eating ice cream in the store
Politicians and prisoners and old ladies in hats
And
Well, everyone
And pandas and mice and pigeons and iceflows and mushrooms
and rocks deep underground and the land we live on and in.
God made it all and is just crazy about how good it is and how beautiful we are,
inside and out.*

Grasping the first truth changes your life. At last you know you are loved and will never be abandoned or deserted. There is one, if only one, who will always treasure you.

Grasping the second truth changes the way you live your life, because you see everything that God loves, and you see that the person in front of you, or beside you, is a favourite person in God's heart too.

This is the first day of Advent, the first day in the rest of our lives in Christ. This is the baptism day of Syncere and Jordyn, the first day of the rest of the lives in Christ.

This is the first day of the time we have left to live in the luxury and peace of being loved, honoured and delighted in by God our Father. Syncere, Jordyn, each of us and all of us together as Grace Church.

This is the first day of the time we have left to see the great second truth of God in Christ, and living in Christ's inextinguishable hope, we build the Kingdom of Heaven. Syncere, Jordyn, each of us and all of us together as Grace Church.