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Christ Reigns A
Peace, Seattle
November 23, 2014
Matthew 25:31-46

WADING IN THE WATERS

It all starts here, as we wade in these waters:

- Christ's claiming of us, and our journey with him;
- God weaving us—our individual stories—into the grand story of his amazing grace, and fitting the pieces of our lives together in this grand puzzle—this grand experiment called Christian community.

The story of our redemption, the saga of rebirth, the tale of the world's future?
It all begins here in these waters where God washes us and frees us to be the persons we were created to be.

Sing it with me…

Wade in the water, wade in the water children,
Wade in the water, God's going to trouble the water.

Kelly Fryer, author of the little book, RECLAIMING THE "L" WORD (**L** = Lutheran) tells of a seminary professor who drew a gigantic ARROW on the chalk board, pointing straight down, and said:

'If you understand that, you understand everything you need to know about what it means to be a Christian…who also happens to be a Lutheran.'

What does it mean?

'God always comes down—God *always* comes down.'

There's nothing we can ever do to turn that arrow around so we make our way UP to God. God came down in Jesus. And God still comes down—in water, wine and wheat, and in the community of believers. God ALWAYS comes down.[1]

Now, sisters and brothers, here's the next startling truth:

When you wade in these waters, your funeral has already taken place.

TRUST ME! says God, **I'LL HANDLE THE RESURRECTION PART—JUST TELL ME:**

What is it you're going to do with this one, wild, and precious life I've given you?

That, you see, is the real question.

The question of salvation? Over. Done. God took care of it in Jesus.

Now, how are you going to take the grace and love I'm giving you and, combining it with the one-of-a-kind person you are, put it to work in the world?

How are you going to live it? Enflesh it? Make it real for others around you?

When we stay close to these waters, when we wade in these waters, we discover our purpose in life, discover our passion, discover our vocation.

And looking at vocation through the lens of today's gospel, we see that, at its core, vocation has to do with loving God by caring for the neighbor.

[1] *Reclaiming the "L" Word: Renewing the Church from its Lutheran Core.* Augsburg Fortress © 2003, p 29, 30

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> 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'
>
> And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'[2]

But here's another reality: the world doesn't want us to go there.
The world has other plans for us, you see.

The world prefers a self-centered orientation; that we look at our own interests first and always.

- IT wants to be in charge of defining us;
- IT wants to tell us what we should value;
- IT wants to tell us who is a lost cause and who is worthy of our attention.

I got an American Express offer in the mail last week, inviting me to "explore the power of the platinum card." World Class Service Can Be Yours, the packet informed me, and the incentives for signing up were many:

- 100,000 reward miles
- Unlimited access to Centurion Lounges
- Exclusive access to once-in-a-lifetime experiences
- Premium global assist hotline
- NO pre-set spending limit!

A WORLD OF PRIVILEGE AWAITS YOU—COME ON—BE PART OF THE CLUB, YOU DESERVE IT.

The world of commerce would love to define us—to tell us what's important and help us rack up more reward points on our American Express or Visa or Mastercards. To be the voice we listen to.

But here at the font God turns the tables on net worth.
Here at the font, the bottom line truth has nothing to do with your bank account and everything to do with your infinite worth in the eyes of the God of infinite love.

For us who approach these waters there is but one Voice to follow. The one which announces:
YOU, CHILD, YOU ARE MY BELOVED DAUGHTER! MY BELOVED SON!

That's God talking! And don't let any one, any way, any time, tell you any different.
But be prepared for resistance. Because wading in baptismal waters means wading into troubled waters.

Amanda … A.J.
It's been a long journey that's brought you to this day; a journey through plenty of troubled water.

But like a jigsaw puzzle whose image finally comes into focus when key pieces are put into place, YOU have come to see with crystal clarity the God who has loved you from the beginning, and who has led you step by step to this day.

And we are witnesses, as the Spirit takes you these final feet into the water, and joins you, with your son Brennan, and with Christie & Erica, Liz &Randy, Lu & Martin, to the Body of Christ that is Peace.

[2] Matthew 25:37-40 NRSV

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When we wade in the waters we become forever connected to the community of God's people from every tribe and race, and with this covenant of connection, we take on gifts and responsibilities:

- To live among God's people
- To hear God's word and share in Christ's supper
- To proclaim Good News with our mouths and our lives
- To serve all people in the manner of Jesus,
- To strive for justice and peace in all the earth

These commitments we make couldn't be more personal, for they have to do with how we carry ourselves—as individuals and as community—in the world; choices we make on a daily basis.

But these commitments are also public. For the city on the hill cannot be hid. The light that glows within is not meant to be concealed but to shine.

And the beauty is, we have been called to take all this on, NOT in a solitary way but rather as a community together, with Christ as our companion all along the way.

So that when we receive Christ at this Table, and leave this place, we become what we receive: Christ's own body, blessed, broken and shared – for the life of the world.

Amen.