

"Cleansed by the Blood of Christ" -- 1 John 1:7b

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Emmett, Idaho
October 29, 1995 -- Reformation Sunday

The Baptism of Kayla Jean Buchta

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Dear friends in Christ,

This is the day that the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it! Certainly, Scott and Karen, happy parents of their firstborn, are glad that this day has come, when Kayla has been born again. Indeed, from my vantage point both at the Baptismal font and here in the pulpit, I have detected smiles on the faces of many people in general, and especially on some rather joyful people sitting up here in these front two pews. This is a special day for us, when by water and the Word, the Family of Our Redeemer has a new baby sister. God the Holy Spirit, working through the Word of promise, has bestowed the gift of faith to Kayla. A miracle has taken place here this day.

Therefore, I direct your attention to the Word of the Lord our God, written by the Holy Spirit using the hand of the Apostle John. In his first letter, he tells us the essence of Christianity. Please listen to chapter 1, the last part of verse 7 and know that we are ...

... Cleansed by the Blood of Christ!

The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

The scene was set almost like a stage that morning. All eyes were directed to the man up front. Water was poured into a small basin, just enough water for what needed to be done, because certainly it would not be the amount of water that was of critical importance for what would happen on that day. The water, as well as what the man would do, were only symbolic. Indeed it was not the water that did the thing that needed to be communicated to the people who had assembled at the place. It was the word of the man which would count. He had a message to convey and it would be done both with his mouth and with the symbolic action of his hands.

Now, the LORD was in the midst of all the people drawn together at that place and at that time. The other man, the man in the position of authority and leadership, leaned forward to the small basin and dipped his hands into the room temperature water. Still it was cool on his hands, especially when he lifted them out into the morning air, water streaming from his palms and fingers as he did. Jesus stood by as the man wrung his dripping hands in symbolic action. Then it was that Pontius Pilate said, *I am innocent of the Blood of this Man.*

The Roman Governor attempted to make a declaration that, well, if Jesus ended up crucified, then he, Pontius Pilate, was no longer responsible. But the simple words of man do not absolve either the

heart, the soul, or the hands of a man. One is not able to put Jesus off with such words spoken and such deeds done. Indeed, unable to accomplish what the man desired, they are just words spoken as the hands were dipped into a wishing-well filled with water. Pilate was not innocent and he could not wash his hands of the Blood of Jesus by saying so. Guilt remained in Pilate's hands and sin stained his soul, a soul that needed complete cleansing.

The people responded to Pilate's ineffective declaration, *I am innocent of the Blood of this Man*. They yelled that the guilt of Jesus should be upon them. They would be responsible for His Blood; they would take responsibility for the innocent Blood of Jesus. *All the people answered and said, His Blood be on us and on our children*. Such a statement could be understood one way, and then again another way too. But, on that morning, those people wanted the guilt of Jesus Blood to be on their hands and their children's hands. Oh, and it is true that what people want from the Blood of Jesus, people get from the Blood of Jesus.

And so the stage is set again and someone walks onto it in the darkness of night and guilt and death. The conscience -- oh, the conscience of someone with a blood-stained soul has awakened that someone from a restless sleep. She walks the floor, wringing her hands and speaking to the invisible, cursed blood spots on her hands. "Yet here's a spot!" ... "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" Having her hand in the murder of others, Lady Macbeth sees her sin in those hidden blood spots, saying, "What, will these hands ne'er be clean?" Her nose detects the stench of her guilt and she replies, "Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!"

And you know what? Lady Macbeth was right. Though invisible, the guilty blood spots were there and she couldn't get rid of them. Neither minutes nor an eternity of hand-wringing will ever remove the red pigment of guilt. No human effort can take away a single spot. Pacing the dark floors every night will never take away a single blemish from the soul saturated with sin. No human effort can cleanse a single spot. Applying a multitude of nose-gays permeated with perfumes never take away the stench of death that arises from within. All such human inventions to cover up the smell of sin fail utterly and completely.

Looking back on a life lived like that and a death died apart from the needed cleansing of one's soul can only bring the futility observed and noted by Macbeth himself when he learned that his wife was dead:

"Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing."

To die such a death, a death without one's soul having been cleansed, is nothing less than hell, a complete and total separation from the LORD God. It is certainly not God's intention that anyone die like that. To see just how much God wanted everyone to be forgiven and with Him in eternal Paradise, look at what the LORD has done. The Son of God, in order to die, is born in a stable and is placed in a wooden feeding trough in Bethlehem. A young couple, the Baby's mother and His foster father, wanting the best for the Child entrusted to their care, carried Jesus down to the land of Egypt.

Thirty years later, the Christ is enthroned on Calvary's cross, His Blood shed and His Body given for the sin-saturated souls of all people. But now, dear people, lift up your eyes and see Him risen from death and the grave. Here is your Savior, the LORD Whose Blood cleanses us from all sin. He lives!

The scene was as it had been many times before. Water was poured into a small basin, just enough water for what needed to be done. Certainly it would not be the amount of water that was of critical importance for what would happen on that day. Indeed it was not the water that did the great things that would take place as the people gathered in this room. A young couple, entrusted with the care of a little girl, walks down the aisle of the church; a husband and wife, now a young father and young mother, want nothing less than all of the promises of God in Christ for their baby girl.

For you see, the couple believed that the baby girl needed forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation. And, in loving, parental care and in trusting, godly faith, they made sure that she received the promise of God intended for them and for the children. And that morning, a miracle took place. The infant girl became the possessor, not only of the much needed forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation, but she also became an heir of heaven itself, a child of God herself, a member of the Body of Christ, and the newest little sister of several hundred people who call Our Redeemer, their extended family. Angels and archangels and all the company of heaven sang as the LORD's chosen people increased by one small child. Here another soul had been cleansed by the Blood of Jesus Christ.

The scene was set almost like a stage. Oh, and we remember it and we picture it in our minds. All eyes were directed to the Man up front, the Man at the center of their attention. Water was poured into a small basin, just enough water for what needed to be done. Certainly it would not be the amount of water that was of critical importance for what would happen on that night. Indeed it was not the water that did the thing that needed to be communicated to the people who had assembled at the place that evening. It was the Word of the Man which would count. He had a message to convey and it would be done both with His mouth and with the actions of His hands.

The LORD was in the midst of all the people drawn together at that place and at that time. The Man in the position of leadership, leaned toward the small basin and dipped His hands into the room temperature water. Still it was cool on His hands, especially when he lifted them out and into the evening air, water streaming from his palms and fingers as he did. Jesus, stooping low, perhaps on His knees, began washing the feet of His disciples. The towel around His side was used to dry the newly cleansed soles of the disciples' feet.

After a discussion about the necessity of such cleansing and after Jesus told them that they did not need to be immersed in order to be clean, the LORD took His place back at the table and He speaks

.... Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

Today Kayla has been born again and we rejoice in the blessed miracle which our eyes have seen this day. Now, our task and Kayla's task is to remain faithful unto death. That means that Kayla will need to be at church worshipping the LORD, singing the liturgy, memorizing and reciting Scripture verses, the ancient creeds, and their meanings, and always focusing on the truth that she and we are

Cleansed by the Blood of Christ. Indeed, this is most certainly true! The hymns of Christendom, learned in infancy, sustain the child of God for decades. Providing for Kayla means singing to her and singing with her. It means teaching her by both word and deed, and helping her as she teaches us what it means to have a childlike faith. That's a part of washing one another's feet.

The scene is set on the stage of eternity. It is the scene of what will be after the end comes, and, through the pen of the holy writer, our eyes are able to behold it now. It is the scene of those standing in eternal Paradise. If you look close enough, you will see yourself and Darlene [*note: Darlene C***** died from cancer on Saturday night*] and Kayla dressed in white robes and with palm branches waving in hands. If you listen with a discerning ear, you will hear yourself and Darlene and Kayla singing, *Salvation belongs to our God Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!*

Listen! A question is asked, *Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?*

Listen once more, dear people, for an answer is given ...

... These are those who have come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He Who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger no more nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb Who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to

.... to living fountains of waters.