



Supposedly, it was October 14, when I was further ushered into all of this. I don't remember a thing about it. I was only a few months into this whole earthly living. I wasn't asked if it was okay to do so. People tell me I wasn't exactly a quiet soul in my younger years, so I'm sure I would have said something along the lines of "no thanks" with some kicking and screaming thrown in to the whole idea.

Having to be in front of a bunch of people I didn't know, having to keep myself calm for what probably felt like an eternity at the time, and this random guy in a white robe putting all this water and oil on my face. I don't remember anything about the day at all, but supposedly the whole baptism thing happened without my permission. I don't remember being asked about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit, or if I was ready to make a promise about the rest of my life going forward, but evidently, it still happened. Evidently, even though I didn't know anything about all of this, parents and godparents and family stood up for me anyway, and even all those strangers in the pews who I didn't know whatsoever; they stood up for me, too. Perhaps on that baptism day, I was further ushered into all of this with a fair amount of grace, to be sure.

Nevertheless, if we're truly honest with ourselves, with all of us who have seen our fair share of baptisms over the years, including for those who didn't have any earthly idea what was going on; if we're truly honest with our churchy selves, sometimes baptism is the first of many tasks to mark off on our Lutheran list. Baptism to Sunday school to Confirmation to youth group to your high school graduation recognition in the same sanctuary where it all started, and then your wedding by the same altar, and hopefully some committee and Council service, before you have your own children and start the whole process all over again, and keep this beloved church thing going as long as we possibly can for infinite generations to come. If we're truly honest with Lutheran selves, sometimes baptism is reduced to a one-time get-it-done thing to satisfy all the living family generations, with a little extra reassurance that the cute cuddly baby is taken care of for all eternity.

I don't know if I even really thought anything different about the whole baptism thing until I got to seminary, a place where you're supposed to broaden your horizons about God and the church. I'm sure we talked about baptism during Confirmation, but, I of course, didn't remember anything from those classes. Nevertheless, what I still remember now is walking into the campus sanctuary for the first time. Immediately, you come up to this massive font, as if it is meant to be the center of something. And it was not only massive and beautiful and the clearest water filling it, but they designed it in such a way for the water to be always flowing, always streaming through, as if, maybe it isn't supposed to be a one-time get-it-done thing. Maybe baptism living is supposed to be constant. Maybe the same waters that flowed over the foreheads of those who didn't have the faintest idea what the heck was going on, would be flowing within them forever. And maybe it wasn't just about giving them a little extra eternal reassurance.

Maybe when God saw one who didn't have the faintest clue about any of this, one who maybe would prefer being anywhere else, one who couldn't make any promises how their life would turn out, maybe in the midst of all of that, God still saw potential, God still saw an impact to be made, God still saw a disciple of hope and mercy and love. Maybe baptism was never meant to be a one-time get-it-done thing. Maybe baptism was meant to be life-long, a life-giving, and life-shaping identity as a child of God: yes, always embraced by the Divine, no matter how much or little you knew about churchy anything, no matter how much you messed up on promises made, that God was never going to lose the holiest love on you or anyone else. Not only that, but, as a child of God, you

were blessed with this relentless Holy Spirit that insisted on working through you to reach those in and outside sanctuary walls, including those who don't know what to make about baptism and Communion and church anything.

Maybe God envisions these waters to never be still in any church building font. Maybe God insists on unleashing you into rushing streams that will take you on shores of lives you're not so sure you're ready to meet. But oftentimes grace is about God believing in you more than you believe in yourself: that no matter the age or physical ability or knowledge about all of this, you are forever a child of God, yes embraced in love, but empowered with the Gospel of hope that will not stay in one font, in one sanctuary, in one building, but will reach onto any living shore, no matter the terrain. Evidently that same hope that was shown in the waters of the Jordan long ago, lives just the same in you, too. So for that Greatest News for us all, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!