

# 8.25.2024 Sermon

## In the Beginning, We are Loved

### Matthew 3:13-17

#### **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

baptism, god, baptized, Jesus, blessing, love, Christ, beginning, today, goodness, original sin, waters, beloved, good news, genesis, Richard Rohr, place, experience, human, bad

#### **SPEAKER**

Rev. Sophia A. Foutres

Good morning Christian Cornerstone fellows, good morning Christian people. If you're not Christian and you're here, we love you. Thanks for coming anyway, and it's not too late. So, I was kidding, so I had a funny video, but it's not going to work, so instead, I have to tell you some jokes, which I know you won't be too disappointed in. Anyway, it's a beautiful day. Baptism day is my favorite day in the church.

Some of you guys know I'm a hospice chaplain, and one of my favorite things to ask my patients is, do you remember the day when you got baptized? And they always say, Oh yeah, this one guy I just asked, he goes, Oh, it was so cold we were in the river. And so, you know, it's not gonna be cold. It's like, heated in here. So, you really have it made today with this heated pool.

So, I've been thinking a lot about baptism and water, and a lot of times there's a symbol, the little fish here. See that little fish symbol, right? And in the olden days, the way back, old, not like the 50s, but they used to do like half the fish. And it was a symbol to say, hey, we're in the same tribe were following Christ, and they would finish it and make a little fish side.

But have you ever heard about a fish without an eye? Do you know what it's called, A that felt so bad, it was so bad. You guys didn't even pity laugh you did. Thank you. Thank you. Anyway, wow. Well, anyway, good morning. I'm Reverend Sophia Foutres, and it's only up from here. There you go. There you go. Right? Is that so bad? It's not so bad to laugh.

So, I'm super excited for our baptisms, whatever you call them, that's a new word. I made up baptisms today, I am so excited to preach the gospel to you. And we talk about, we talk a lot about preaching the gospel and sharing the good news, but a lot of times. Have you ever noticed how the good news is wrapped up in all kinds of other messages? You know, this is good news for you. If you do this, or if you do that, then you'll be this, that, and the other thing.

So, it's kind of good news, but it's kind of warped. Have you ever had somebody give you a message and then kind of smack you a little bit after it. Anybody raised with a little fire and brimstone in here? All right? Well, you're going to love this message then. So, Richard Rohr, in his book *The Divine dance*, talks a lot about original goodness.

How many of you have ever heard of the phrase Original Sin? Okay? A lot of you, right? So, a lot of us. I can, oh, I can remember the day when I was talking about original sin, which basically just means we start off from a place of being sinful, right? That's the messaging that we're getting. That's why we need Jesus, because we're sinful, we're bad, we need somebody to fix us, right?

That's kind of the messaging that we all got. And I can remember the day it was actually here in this very church, when somebody looked at me and they said, you know, Original Sin is just like a theology that somebody created. I was like, what? He's like, you know, there's something else called original goodness. And I was like, Well, tell me all about it.

I love goodness and good news. And, you know, I'm all about no shame. And so today we're going to talk a little bit about original goodness, the beloved baptism and the blessing that comes at the beginning. Richard Rohr says our starting place was always original goodness, not original sin. This makes our ending place and everything in between, possessing an inherent capacity for goodness, truth and beauty.

See in the beginning, in Genesis, one God created for six days and nights and everything that God made, God said, This is good and on the sixth day, God made humans. And when God made humans, God said they were very good, Wow. You guys are doing great. It's great. See what a lot of times we do, though. I. Is we go right to Genesis three, where Adam and Eve, you know what happened with Adam and Eve?

They make the big old human mistake in this story, and they mess up. And essentially the goodness, the very goodness, becomes the badness that broke everything for all time. But we forget about the beginning, and we say, Yeah, we're bad. We need Jesus, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. You got to get baptized. You got to repent. But it started in Genesis one.

Our beginning was that we were very good. I'll bet, if I was going to go inside some of your brains, your story certainly sounds a lot more like Genesis three than Genesis one. How many would agree with that? Genesis three? I'm a mess up. I'm inherently not worthy. I can't do things blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I shouldn't even get done today because of X, Y and Z, right?

Instead of that Genesis one reality, there's a reason why everything else God made was good, and when God made humans, it was very good. And that's when that love story began, is that the spirit hovered over the earth, and we get this beautiful journey. So that's our beginning. When we're created, we're very good. Do we mess up? Yes. Are we human? Yes. But at our beginning and our core, it's good, it's goodness.

And this is, this is a common theology, but we get the chance always in life to rewrite better endings. And I think a lot of what this church does for us, especially us, our little Motley Crew is we're like, you know, somebody might have wrote a really crappy beginning to your story and your journey of faith, but let's write a better ending.

Without this foundation, we strive and search and come up chasing voids and egos and external validations. But as we are in Christ, this is the good news: we receive the same blessing in these baptism waters. The symbol of submerging our old lives, our old narratives, and coming up out of the water to blessing and the awareness that we are the ones whom God loves, and nothing and no one can take that away. This is the main message that we are the loved of God.

If I ever have anything to say to you for the rest of my life, it's only this: whoever you are, whatever you are, however you are, you are the beloved of God. You start from belovedness. You start from goodness. Yeah, you mess up, so do I. But nothing changes that inherent dignity and worth and value you have as a human being. No matter who tries to say it, no matter what racist or bigot or prejudiced person comes along. Or religious person, nobody can take away the powerful, undeniable resurrection work of Jesus Christ, who whistled, love you. Brandon.

Perfect. So, in Matthew 28:19 through 20, Jesus first models being baptized, and then he gives us the call to baptize other people. So, 2000 years ago, it's recorded, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you and remember that I'm always with you, always to the end of the age."

So why do we continue to do this? You know, the Bible says that if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, then you will experience and have awareness

of the salvation of Christ that was done for all, once for all. That redeemed everyone and everything, once for all, it's done, whether you believe it or you accept it or not and experience it on earth today. It was already done, and it will be done for you until you can realize it for yourself.

It doesn't depend on you saying yes. When you say yes, when we say yes, we get to have that awareness, and we get to experience it and live in it. But it's already been done, and nothing will change it.

So, when we continue to baptize, when we participate in this joyous day today, in the same way that Jesus's baptism revealed to us the circle dance of love, the parent, the father, blessing the Son and the Spirit speaking through, we see that relationship of love encompassing him. And then Jesus says, "Now I want you to baptize everybody else in the same way in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, so that they can be included in that circle dance of love."

See the Trinity. The Trinity is a model of unending love. That is, it about forgiveness of sin? Is it about saying no to your old life? Absolutely, but those things have to happen every single day. But it's about stepping in and having awareness of I am included in the big circle of love of the Divine embrace that comes through Jesus, the parent, and the Spirit of God that rests on us, and we all are included in that.

So, when we say we baptize you today, we're essentially saying we invite you into the deep nature of relationship and interconnectivity with the love of God that never ends, that we continually wash ourselves and others in this deep nature of reality as interconnected and relational with God.

Does it involve teaching and knowledge? Yes, but it is not only a matter of cognitively knowing the right doctrines. Does it involve practice and living out? Yes, but it is not about following rules only.

Ultimately, baptism is an experience of deeply receiving and knowing and publicly declaring to the world that I belong to love, and love belongs to me because of Jesus. And we receive the words that were spoken at first, that you my child, every single one of you are very, very, very, very good, and I love you now live and love others and serve and stay connected, and every time you turn away, just turn back.

Baptism doesn't make us good, it reminds us and aligns us with the voice from heaven of our inherent worth and belovedness. So, my prayer for all of us today is. So, as we participate in this tradition and sacrament of baptism today, that we would all receive and rest in this great

truth, whether we're getting dunked or not, that we are the beloved of God in Christ, that nothing can take that away from us, that we start from being loved. We don't earn it, but we learn to live from it.

With these things in mind, I just want you, if you whatever, however you receive things, put your hand on your chest, or open your hands, or just sit there and look at me. I don't care. With these things in mind, just say under your breath, I am the beloved. I am loved you.

And I pray today, Lord, let us experience the beauty of baptism together with our friends who are publicly displaying their connection to the original blessing in Christ that we have lived and yet we have died many times in our own ways, but now we get to live again from a place of total belovedness. Thanks be to God. Amen You.