

Baptism Sermon Oct 9/11 Thanksgiving Sunday

I've just come back home from a visit to my home town. Among the people I visited there is my nephew Ryan.

Ryan is 27 now, a new dad, a Rotary member, a drummer in a rock band, an Investors Group financial advisor. We're very proud of that boy!

When he was little, he loved to hear stories.

Nate and I bought him a children's Bible when he was born and he loved for us to read to him, and tell him the stories.

Tell me again he used to say. Read it again. Tell me about Daniel in the lions' den. Tell me about the time Moses led the people across the sea. Tell me about when Nanny and Papa were married. Tell me again. He was learning who he was. Who he is. Tell me again. Tell me who I am. Who WE are.

He was learning what it is to be part of our family. By hearing the stories over and over again.

Stories are like that. We love to hear them again and again. And you know what? This year, he picked me up at the airport in TB, and it was a 5 hour drive home. And on the way....he wanted the stories again. Tell me again. Still learning. Still curious. Still needing the comfort, the spell that stories weave, a spell of belonging and meaning and wonder. Tell me again.

He's a grown up man....with a daughter of his own. And he still wants to hear the stories. I hope and pray with all my heart that some day they'll be in the truck when his daughter has just come home from university or wherever she has made her adult home, and he'll pick her up at the airport and on the way home she'll say tell me dad; tell the about the time that he will some day pass them on to his own daughter. And so the circle will continue.

We live by stories. The stories tell us who we are, how the world works, our place in this universe. And who to thank for it all.

You will do many things for Theo in his life. You will give him many gifts. There will be none more precious than what you do for him today and the story you've begun in him right now. He is part of the story of the people of God.....please tell him that. Tell him the story we tell each other here every Sunday – the story of God's love affair with the world. That this world is a good gift from a good God - a precious, fragile, generous home; a place of wonder.

Tell him about the day of his baptism; that we were here in profound thanksgiving – all of us together. And make no mistake...this is not whistling in the dark, Pollyannaish hiding our heads in the sand..... some of us are dealing with really hard things in our lives. Others so happybabies born or expected, some of us newly in love, some of us delighting in family being together...others struggling with painful, frightening things.

For most of us, there's some of each. But we're here. And we're together. AND WE CHOOSE TO BE THANKFUL. WE CHOOSE TO BE THANKFUL. WE HAVE MADE A CHOICE TO APPROACH THE WORLD AND EACH MOMENT WITH GRATITUDE Tell him that.

And tell him that because of our choice of how to be in this world, we stood on our feet today, and said that we welcome him; that we'll pray for him and for you, and that in spite of the things that divide us or make us sad; in the midst of the things that fill our hearts and our days for better or for worse, we stand here together for the sake of this child and the children in our midst and wetell the story one more time.

And tell him that we stand here thankful. Because ...because of life. The wonder and mystery and the simple fact that we woke up this morning. We are a profoundly thankful people.

And in that spirit we come to this table where the story is told one more time and we share bread and juice and we rehearse for the day when God's will will be complete in the world, and this will be a place where, as the song says, "we love and we share and everybody gets some"

It's at your table and at ours that Theo will learn who he is. And my prayer is that he will learn and learn again that God delights in him; that his life has meaning; and that he is part of a people who over the ages and into the ages to come will sing the praises of the one who loves us beyond our imagining and forever.

Happy thanksgiving – happy thanksgiving.