

“Come close and let me tell you what God has done for me.”

I love that line from our Psalm today.

I wish we could pull up our chairs in a circle and come a little closer together, because it feels like ECOTA story time. I’ll have to leave that to your imagination. Still, come closer in spirit. Let me tell you a little something about what God is up to, little children—a reminder of the surprising ways God keeps showing up in our human lives as we celebrate together.

And doesn’t that feel especially right today as we gather around Marcus and Deborah at the font?

A three-month-old baby and a “woman of a certain age”, as we might say. One carried in arms. One walking there with decades of life experience behind her. And both are surrounded by people who love them and want them to know they belong here with us.

Which somehow brings me to Tina Turner, who famously asked: *“What’s love got to do with it?”* And then answered: *“What’s love but a second-hand emotion?”*

Yes, *“what’s love got to do with it?”*

Honestly, there are days when the world can make that second-hand emotion feel true. Love can seem like a flimsy feeling that comes and goes, depending on moods or circumstances, or on whether people or circumstances are easy to deal with.

And then...then.. there are moments like this morning.

Moments when the Church gathers around water and promises and laughter and hope and says: ***YES! Actually... love has quite a lot to do with it.***

Because Jesus talks about love differently. Love is not just sentiment, romance, or warm feelings. Love is presence. Love is staying connected. Love is refusing abandonment.

“I will not leave you orphaned,” Jesus says.

And maybe what makes those words so beautiful, hopeful, and so very poignant for us right now is that Jesus says them, knowing life is complicated. His disciples are anxious. The world around them is uncertain. And he knows there will still be grief and confusion and struggle ahead.

But the promise is there: *You will not go through it alone.*

This is why days like today matter so much—a truth that comes into focus as we reflect together.

Because baptism is never just about the individual person standing at the font. It is about community. It is about belonging. It is about all of us remembering who we are together.

As we gather around Marcus and Deborah today, we are not here as spectators, but as full participants in this holy sacrament. In a few moments, we will renew our baptismal vows together. Covenantal promises that shape our Christian life and faith as members of the “Episcopal branch of The Jesus Movement”, as former Presiding Bishop Michael Curry calls us.

Together we will promise to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship. Together we will promise to persevere in resisting evil, and to seek and serve Christ in all persons. Together, we will promise to strive for justice and peace. And with one voice, we will promise to respect the dignity of every human being.

These are beautiful promises. And if you think about it, every one of them has something to do with love. Not vague sentimentality, but active, living, community-shaped love. The kind of love that keeps showing up. The kind that says: You matter to me, to us. Your life is connected to mine, and to ours. And together, we will walk through joy and sorrow and fire and water.

And after every promise, we will answer: *"I will, with God's help."*

Never alone... "I will... with God's help."

So today, we laugh when babies wiggle. We pass tissues when people get emotional. We stand close together, in body or in spirit, around the water, because this is what human beings do when something important is happening.

We come close.

"Come close and let me tell you what God has done for me", invites the psalmist. Come close enough to hear a story. Come close enough to recognize grace. Come close enough to remember this is where you belong, too.

And so, today is, without a doubt, one of those joyful "come close" moments.

A time to come close and watch baby Marcus being carried to the font surrounded by love. A time to come close and witness a Deborah saying "yes" to continuing on this journey of faith.

A baby at the beginning of life. An adult being "born from above."

Deborah shared with me that a passage of Scripture especially meaningful to her is the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in John's Gospel — the passage about being "born again," or "born from above."

I have always loved that story because Nicodemus comes to Jesus with questions. He is trying very hard to understand Jesus' teaching and how it has been calling to his heart.

And Jesus responds to him with images of wind, Spirit, and mystery.

"The wind blows where it chooses..." he says. In other words, grace does not always arrive on our timetable or in ways we can fully explain. Sometimes the Spirit surprises us. Sometimes the Spirit has been at work in us long before we know how to name it.

Sometimes being "born again" looks less like a dramatic moment and more like discovering that God has been calling your name all along.

And so today we celebrate not only these new beginnings for Marcus and Deborah. At the same time, we acknowledge the Spirit that is still moving among all of us, still inviting us into deeper life, deeper love, and deeper belonging.

"Come close and let me tell you what God has done for me."

This makes for a perfect story for this day—a story of baptism, belonging, and new life. Today is joyful.

Joyful because we are witnessing grace unfolding in real human lives.

Joyful because the Spirit is still moving.

Joyful because the Church still gathers around water, words, promises, and hope.

And in a world that keeps teaching people they are alone, disposable, or forgotten, baptism becomes the Church's stubborn declaration that Love has claimed us and will not let us go.

So perhaps, this morning, we do have an answer to Tina's question after all.

"What's love got to do with it?"

Well...Apparently... everything.

Amen.