

“Make it shine, boys”

- Those were my dad’s parting words to my brother and me as he put us to work
 - We were shining and polishing a brass boat propeller
 - You see, our family had just purchased a used boat with an inboard motor
 - We were set to enjoy all of the fun lake sports, including tubing, going really fast, and may even learning to ski
 - My dad had entertained us with stories of his childhood, of skiing, then slalom skiing with just one ski
 - And even shedding both skis and going barefoot on top of the water!
 - For two young boys, the possibilities here had grown big in our imaginations- bigger than reality, truth be told
 - And we were very excited about this secondhand boat.
 - Now here’s the real clever part... the boat needed a new propeller, my dad’s uncle had an old one and we got it
 - It was brass, and very tarnished from years of no use
 - My dad told us that the smoother that propeller was, and the more we polished and shined it, the faster the boat would go
 - Which I I suppose is true, that a smooth propeller does have a little less drag in the water
 - But in my bother’s and my mind we believed we could easily double the speed of that boat with enough polish
 - And we polished for days, with excitement and anticipation of all of the amazing things this boat was going to do and the fun we would have
 - And we did it the hard way! A little brasso, and a lot of elbow grease
 - And slowly
 - Now truth be told the boat’s engine was not that reliable
 - And believe it or not- if the engine doesn’t start, it matters not what the propeller looks like
 - But none-the-less, we were quite proud of uncovering the shiny, almost golden propeller that was hidden under the years of tarnish

- And I still believe that onlookers were impressed as we pulled that boat to the lake
- This morning, we are not only celebrating the feast of the Transfiguration
 - But are taking the opportunity to baptize three new members into God's family, represented by you and me right here
 - It is a solemn and joyous occasion, and one that I hand out as freely as possible
 - I believe that anyone- everyone- who desires baptism, who desires this connection with God provided by this Sacrament, should receive it
 - It is a chance for us to be a church, a community of faith, and fulfill one of our most sacred obligations
 - That is to promise to uphold everyone who passes through these holy waters
 - And for each of us to remember and renew what it is that we are supposed to be focused on
 - What is important, right?
 - These baptismal vows are heard and repeated so often that I think we are tempted to let them roll off the tongue too quickly
 - They are much more important than that
 - If you ever get asked: what does the Episcopal church believe? And what does God want from us?
 - Here is your answer: a combination of the Apostles Creed, and the questions and answers that follow it.
 - That is where the conversation starts. It is where the debate starts too.
 - But we gather, not identical in our faith, or in how it forms us and our decisions and our actions
 - But we gather with the common core of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ in the Episcopal tradition
 - And it is in a baptism we were make apparent a holy truth that is already there
 - That God loves them, that God reaches out to them, and that nothing they do can sever that love and connection
 - And we Baptize to uncover, or reveal, that truth, to name it, give it power and presence and tangibility
 - So that we all know and are all reminded of our own intimate relationship with the God who created us.
 - We use a little water and a little oil to remove the tarnish, so to speak, and let the reality of our being shine through
- It is extremely helpful this morning to see our lessons through this lens

- Because each of our readings challenges us to have our true selves be visible- to shine
- We can begin with Moses up on that mountain- smoke, fire, the ground shakes- all with the uncontainable presence of God
- God seems to be pulling out the stops to make an unforgettable impression on the Israelites
- God has heard them, freed them through Moses and plagues and miracles
- And this concludes a significant portion of their journey, while beginning another one of wandering in the wilderness
- Moses was God's spokesman, the intermediary and steward of this new relationship being formed between God and the people
- The commandments would be the start of it- the shape of the type of people God wanted them, and us, to be
- Whenever Moses was in God's presence and functioning as this holy messenger, his face would begin to shine
- And his skin was shining when he relayed the commands and laws to the people
- He would then veil his face until the next time he went before the LORD
- Interesting translation here- the word translated as "shine" was usually translated as "horn" ¹
- Michelangelo sculpted a statue of Moses and gave it horns²
- It was not that Moses simply glowed- there's more going on here than that, but we don't really know
- I do not think any of this is too literal- I would bet that this is a desperate attempt to describe something beyond words
- It more than shined, more than horns,
- It changed Moses appearance in a significant way that likely made everyone scared or uncomfortable, thus the veil
- I cannot help but wonder if being in God's presence didn't make Moses shine with his true self
 - You know the part of us that is made in God's image, our soul, our deepest reality as a child of God
- I wonder if the people didn't get a glimpse of that when Moses' face shined with God's truth and presence.
- His physical body no longer able hide the brilliance underneath the skin

¹ New Interpreter's Bible Commenter, Volume One, CD-ROM version

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses_%28Michelangelo%29

- Fast forward a couple of thousands of years, and we have Jesus transfigured on the top of the mountain
 - And who is there with him except Moses, once again shining,
 - And Elijah who was taken up to heaven in a flaming chariot of fire
 - And Jesus, transfigured, transformed, and shining brightly in robes of dazzling white, much like Moses³
 - I wonder if Jesus had a “horn of light” also- Luke does not go into details, but just says that his face was changed.
 - By having Jesus talk to these great Jewish men of God, Luke has declared that Jesus both knows what God wants us to do like Moses, and also knows God’s continuing revelations like Elijah
 - Jesus was talking with the possibly the two greatest men of the Jewish faith, and God’s voice sounded once again.
 - With these three together talking, it was certain that the divine will was being delivered ⁴
 - For Luke’s gospel, this is the final and overwhelming proof that Jesus was divine
 - You could literally see it
 - The veil that shrouds our eyes in this world growing so thin in the mighty presence of its creator that one can see the true nature beneath
- In just a few minutes we will bless the water, we will make our promises both to God and to one another
 - And we will use holy water and holy oil to mark and reveal something extremely precious and divine
 - And that is God’s deep and abiding commitment to this world, to all of God’s children, and to you and me.
 - And today especially to **[BAPTISMAL NAMES NAMES...]**
 -
 - The prayer book says that baptism creates an indelible- or permanent- mark on us as Christ’s own forever
 - I say that the water simply reveals what God has already made to be true
 - God’s love and hope for these babies lives and future, and for ours
 - And that we are made in God’s image, and made for a purpose that is bigger than we are

³ Arland Hultgrn, http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?lect_date=2/14/2010#

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- Once we glimpse that glowing truth, it changes us, and who we are, and how we treat each other
- How we raise our children, how we bury our dead
- Because we believe that God, out of love, created the heavens and the earth, and all that dwell therein
- And Jesus came, incarnate of that being, to set us on the right path and to bring us back to God
- To reveal to us our true nature and purpose
- And we believe that the Holy Spirit continually reminds us- even when it is inconvenient- of that true of who we are
- And we need the reminder- sometimes life puts a lot of tarnish over the light that wants to shine
- Today we wash a little away, today we reveal God's presence and commitment in our lives
- Let us also renew our faith and our commitment to God and God's work in the world around us
- Let us reveal our true nature and shine brightly in a world that can get pretty dark.

Amen.