

b28Pentecost 24 ~ November 15, 2009 ~ A homily preached by The Rev'd Erl G. Purnell at Old St. Andrew's Church, Bloomfield, CT

1 Samuel 1.4-20; Psalm 16; Hebrews 10.11-25; Mark 13.1-8

Good morning Harrison and good morning to your family, too. What a special treat to celebrate this day with you. Over the years, your Dad has come to Old St. Andrew's many, many times. Then, one day, we met your Mom and, in time, they were married here. A couple years ago, your brother Garrett showed up and we welcomed him into the Church of God and this parish. So, you have a long family connection here. And shortly, you will be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's own forever.

Harrison, before we get started, I have only one request of you. As you get a bit older, will you please work on getting your parents to move closer to Bloomfield so you all can come here every week?

In the meantime, we're glad you're here today. You see, even though you live in Higganum, the church is big enough and broad enough to reach you there. I've said many times, and here I'm saying it again, the church—*ekklesia* in the Greek—is not this building or any building; it's not priests and bishops; it's not an institution either. Quite simply, the church is the Body of Christ. It is you and me and all the rest of us. The church is people.

We gather together to worship every week. Worship is good and in it we are refreshed by the Word and the Eucharist, music, prayer, and teaching. But, worship is not only what the church is about.

Harrison, let me use myself as an example. A long while ago, I was baptized. Since then, a lot of other things have happened to me: I graduated from high school and college, was commissioned in the Navy and designated a Naval Aviator, got some Masters degrees, and was ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church. Now, I have the privilege of serving as Rector here at OSA.

Some people might think that almost everything I do here is because I'm ordained, I'm a priest, the Rector. Well, that's actually not true. Probably 99% of what I do here and elsewhere in my life has nothing to do with my ordination. Rather, who I am in the world is through my baptism. I am marked as Christ's own and my being in the world has everything to do with the mark of baptism on my forehead. Although you might not see it, no matter what direction I face, the mark of my baptism glows on my forehead.

And shortly, I will baptize you so that you too will have that mark of baptism on your forehead. The which is to say, as you encounter the vagaries of life, always remember who you are. You are a child of God and part of the Body of Christ. If you ever wonder, 'Should I do this? Is this a good idea?' Remember who you are. You are a child of God and part of the Body of Christ.

So, here, the first and last stanza of the hymn we just sang. Maybe your Mom and Dad will get it written in calligraphy and framed above you bed:

*Loving Spirit, loving Spirit, you have chosen me to be; you have drawn me to your wonder, you have set your sign on me.*

Blessings to you Harrison Reed, on this your baptismal day and forever.

*Amen.*

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