

Year C – First Sunday in Lent – March 9, 2025

Pastor Megan Floyd

Luke 4:1-13

Grace and peace to you from God, our Creator, and from our Lord, Jesus Christ, in whose death and resurrection we share through the gift of Holy Baptism. Amen.

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What a joyful day!

Today we celebrate Stella who has been adopted into God's family as our sibling in Christ... through the waters of baptism and through God's word... God's holy promise... spoken for us.

God's promise to Stella today reminds us that this promise is for us as well... that even though we may find ourselves lost and alone in the wilderness, God's promise to us in our baptism is that God is with us... always...

God promises to meet us in our wilderness, and that through water and word, our sins are drowned each day... and each day we are made new, forgiven, and loved.

Through baptism, we share in our Lord's death and resurrection... dying daily to our sin ... and rising anew each day, embracing the promise of new life with Christ...

Each day we are reborn, reconciled to God... and freed to worship God and give thanks, and respond to this precious gift by caring for others and boldly loving the world as God so loves the world.

Baptism is a precious gift... that draws us into God's grace, and transforms our relationship with God, and with our world.

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How poetic it is, then, that we celebrate Stella's baptism on this day... the first Sunday in Lent.

During Lent, we are called to pay special focus to all that draws us away from God, and to be intentional in our thoughts and actions, choosing patterns and habits that will bring us back closer to our Creator.

We might fast, as Jesus did in the wilderness, so that each thought of whatever you are avoiding, becomes a reminder to return to the Lord and give thanks.

Or we might introduce more intentional prayer and time for meditation on God's faithful presence in our lives.

This can be done alone... or you may choose to lean on the support of others, and come together with our community of Faith here... you could join in our weekly bible study, the Lenten book study, or come on Wednesday nights for our Holden Evening Prayer service.

Or we might choose to give more generously to those in need, sharing gifts that we have first received... and in doing so, sharing love for others and celebrating God's boundless love for all.

However we choose to observe Lent, the goal is to grow in our relationship to God as we move toward the cross, and ultimately, to new life.

The goal is to interrupt the patterns of sin that tempt us... and lead us away from God, as the devil unsuccessfully tempted Jesus...

and to allow the challenge... the struggle... to strengthen us and deepen our faith and our trust in God who sustains us... and to remind us that we are forgiven and washed in grace.

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Our passage today brings us alongside Jesus in the wilderness... he is full of the Holy Spirit because he has just come from his own baptism in the Jordan River, signaling the start of his ministry on Earth.

But even Jesus needed clarity for his mission... to face challenge and struggle... to strengthen himself for the work ahead, and so the Spirit leads him into the wilderness.

The temptations Jesus faced mirror the temptations that Adam and Eve faced in the garden...

to eat food that is not theirs to eat... to reach for power that is promised by one without the authority to make such a promise... and to test God, rather than trust that God will be true to God's promise to provide.

And where humanity falters, Jesus prevails... and in facing these challenges, Jesus gains clarity, and courage for his mission.

And so, it is poetic that on this first Sunday in Lent, we celebrate the gift of Stella's baptism, and by extension, the gift of our own baptism...

We celebrate that Stella is now full of the Holy Spirit, and by extension, we too are full of the Holy Spirit, ready to face the challenges ahead...

ready to strengthen and nurture our relationship with God and give intentional focus to all that God has done for us.

Through our new sister, Stella, we are reminded of the promises we made... Promises that draw us closer to God.

Promises that open our hearts to recognize all the ways that Jesus shows up for us...because that's the goal... that's always the goal.

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God's promise to us through the word and the water is that we are always being made new...

that every day, our sins are drowned... gone... and we rise from the water forgiven... and redeemed, and ready to walk with Christ.

And even though we must die daily to our sin and receive the promise of new life each day... God's promise is everlasting... unwavering... and true.

And though we are still flawed, God still calls us to God's self, still claims us as beloved just as we are, and desires for us to participate in the renewal of Creation by transforming the world around us with love.

Baptism is our physical sign and reminder that we have received God's grace... love... mercy... and forgiveness.

And so today, on this first Sunday in Lent, we celebrate the promise of new life for Stella, and for all of us... and we give thanks to God for the gift of baptism.

Amen.