

Sermon for Sunday 6 August 2023 – The Transfiguration of our Lord

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In the Bible reading we just heard, the voice of God was heard saying, this is my son, the chosen one, and God blesses his son Jesus. It's wonderful to be able to baptise a father and a son in the same service today. I don't think I've ever done that before, so that's really exciting. So we're here for a baptism and what's all that about? What's that for? What does it mean?

Well, the Bible tells us that there was a guy called John the Baptist who lived at the same time as Jesus, and he called people to repent and to turn to God. And those who chose to do so, those who wanted to belong in the family of God, were baptised in the River Jordan in Israel as a symbol of their commitment to follow the ways of God. And Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist in the River Jordan as one of those people claiming all those people as his own, as his family.

And ever since then, the Christian church has baptised in water all those who turn to God and want to belong to his family. So Rowan and Reggie have decided that they want to belong to God's family and have Brodie baptised into it. So that's what we're doing today, and we're going to use some water, and we're going to use some oil, symbols of that commitment and of that promise.

Now, you might say, what's all that about? So baptism is the beginning of a lifelong journey. It's not the final arrival point, it's the beginning of a lifelong journey. So today you both begin that journey of knowing and learning more about Christ. And what your friends and Godparents are going to do is support you on that journey, and what the Church is going to do is we're going to be here to support and love you and welcome you and help you on that journey, too. So it's the beginning, it's not an end, it's a beginning of that lifelong journey of learning more about God, of his love for you and his purposes for you as a family.

So, we've got a candle here and this candle is a symbol - we light a new one each Easter Day - this is a symbol of Christ Jesus present with us by His Holy Spirit, so we can't see his Holy Spirit, but we believe that Jesus is with us now by his Spirit, and this candle is a symbol of that. So I'm going to ask for a volunteer. Who'd like to volunteer for me? Do you want to volunteer for me? Come on up. Come. Yeah, I saw you looking enthusiastic, I thought, there's the man for me.

So come on, stand here for me. So we're going to light a candle from this one, and you're going to hold that for me. And if we were going to say for Brodie, we want think about his whole life, the future of his life, if we were to wish something for him? One thing for Brodie, and for Reggie, what would you think of? One thing. What would you hope his life would be full of or have in it? Is anything? Good health! Fantastic. Yeah, so your candle represents good health. Fantastic.

Okay, another volunteer required. Who'd like to volunteer for me? Everyone looks at their shoes and bootlaces. How about you? You can come, come on, you're a godmother, aren't you? What's your name? Brooke. We light another candle now. And we've got good health. What should we have this candle

represent? Any ideas? Love! Fantastic. Yes, we've prayed for love, haven't we? And we're celebrating the love of God as we gather together as God's family here. So we've got good health, love. Okay, remember that. Good health, love.

Fantastic. Okay, who else would like to volunteer for me? What's your name? Jade. Fantastic. Well done, Jade. Do you want to stand next to Brooke for me? Okay, so how about this candle? What should we have this candle represent for us? Any thoughts? We've got good health. We've got love. Happiness! Yeah, that's a good one, isn't it? We would hope that Brody would know happiness in his life. So good health, love, happiness. Those are good things to wish for, aren't they?

Okay, so one more volunteer for me. I'm going to come to the back this time and choose somebody who's definitely looking at their shoes. How about you, sir? We need another man up the front. Come on. What's your name? Harry. Harry, well done Harry. So do you want to come and stand there for me? So one more candle; and what would we hope that this one might represent? What would we hope for? One more candle. We've got good health, love, happiness. One more thing. Kindness! That they would be kind or they receive kindness; or both. Yeah, kindness. That's good. That they would be kind. Really good. So we've got good health, love, happiness, kindness. Brilliant. Those are really good things, aren't they?

Well, if we think about the whole life that we've all lived and all the experiences that we all know about in life, should any of us say that we have good health all the time? No.

Fantastic. Yours was loved. Yeah. It's good to be loved, isn't it? All the time. Have any of us ever felt that we weren't loved or that we didn't do as much loving as we should have done? Anybody ever felt that? You're nodding. Yeah, so sometimes we don't feel we've been as loved as much as we should have done or that we've loved others as much as we should have done. Do you want to blow that out for me? Fantastic. Yours was happiness. Fantastic. I was very happy yesterday because the season got off to a good start. 2-1 win, goal in the last minute, couldn't be better, could it? You know what I'm talking about! Yes. So what was it again? Happy. That's fantastic. Yeah, how many of us are all happy all the time? Has anybody ever not felt happy? Yeah, we maybe know the opposite; we know we could be sad sometimes and not feel too happy. So do you want to blow that out for me? Fantastic.

Kindness. Kindness. It's nice to be kind, isn't it? And it's really good when somebody is kind to us, but I can think of times when I've not been very kind. Can you think of times when you've not been very kind? Can you think of that? Sometimes? Or maybe people haven't been as kind to us as we wish they had been.

Yeah, so all those things can happen, but we haven't blown this candle out. This candle was a symbol of Christ Jesus with us by his spirit. Yeah. So we're not going to blow that candle out because Jesus promises to be with us always, always, every day of our life as we walk together with him. And when we know that Christ Jesus is walking with us, good health - even though we might not in our bodies always know good health, we may know in our hearts that Christ Jesus is with us. We can know good health in a general sense, in our spirits and in our souls. And that can give us sense of strength in our bodies.

Love. Yeah, so this candle is a symbol of love. The love of God never, ever goes out. One of the promises for Reggie and Brodie in this service is from God - I will love you always. Always. That will never stop. The love of God, happiness.

And when we know that we're loved, then that gives us a deep sense of happiness. Not happiness like Norwich won at home, but happiness because we know that we are deeply loved. We belong to God, we're part of his family, and nothing can take that away. So a deep, deep happiness in God.

Kindness; and Jesus is one of the kindest persons who ever lived. Kind because he loves us, knows us, understands us, welcomes us. And so today, Jesus offers you his kindness, his love, his welcome, his embrace to you and all your family today; not just for today, but for the rest of your lives in Jesus' name. Amen.