

John 15:1-8 ^{NIV} John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

“Abiding in Christ: Making Bubbles”

William used to love taking a bath with the exception of getting his hair washed. He has his little bath toys including two little men, one a fireman that goes with a little fireboat and the other a little pilot. He liked it when they did high diving off the side of the tub and especially from the showerhead. He loved to splash and...pee in the tub. He hated getting out of the bath. One of his favourite “I’m not getting out” stunts was to lay on his belly when the tub was empty and make himself slide back and forth in the tub. He really loved a bath. All you had to do was say “Let’s go take a bath” and he would say “yeah” or “OK”, drop everything, and start climbing the stairs.

But, for some reason, in the last month William has become afraid of taking a bath. If we ask him if he would like a bath, he says a quick no and that’s the end of the conversation. We don’t know why. It doesn’t appear to be a power issue that comes along with being a terrible two. When he’s doing that he usually looks at you with a look that obviously says “Can I get away with this?” and when he realizes the answer no he has a short lived tantrum and that’s that. He seems to be actually afraid of taking a bath. We think getting water poured over him to rinse him off is what has sparked fear in him. So, it’s probably simply fear and misunderstanding what the rinsing is about that has gotten the best of him.

Well, last night I decided he needed a bath. He hadn’t had one in two weeks and it was two weeks before that and then it took Granny’s tub and a bath with Jake and Ben. Unfortunately, that only worked once. Last weekend he refused even to take a bath with them. So, I went and prepared the tub. I made a very bubbly bath and got a bottle of bubble blowing stuff and went downstairs and got him and brought up to the tub. He started crying and screaming, “No! No! No!” I showed him all the bubbles and striped him down and put him in. He started screaming and tried to climb out. Then I striped down and jumped in the tub with him. I started splashing and showed him that’s how you made more bubbles. He looked at what I was doing; tears, snot, and boogies all over the place, and then when back to crying. Then I gave myself a bubble beard. He thought that was funny. Then I got the bubble blowing stuff and blew some bubbles. He blew some bubbles too. We splashed and made bubbles and got his little man and finally he sat down. He loved it when I got a handful of bubbles and blew them

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against the wall. He laughed and had so much fun until I started washing his hair. He knew what was coming. We went threw the fear of it together a little bit at a time. By the end of the bath, he didn't want to get out. He even put his face under the running water and rinsed himself off with a squirt bottle. Hopefully, after a couple of these baths he will loose his fear and love baths again and even be able to rinse himself off.

Well, that bath got me thinking theologically. Like William, we humans used to enjoy the good bath of an unhindered relationship with God. But, then came the Fall and we became afraid of God and invented our own image of God as an angry, unappeasable, and unpleasable perfectionist who wanted nothing to do with us until we cleaned up our moral act. So, we became afraid of the bath with God and of God. Yet, God never changed. God never was and never will be an angry, unappeasable, and unpleasable perfectionist. So, in his great love for us, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit decided to change the way we understand him and the bath. God the Son became human and jumped into the tub with us sharing our fear and in the midst of that showing us the Father's love. This is what the Trinity has done for all of humanity not just those who say the magic words of “I believe.”

God got into the tub with humanity to take the uncleanness away from everybody, the uncleanness that was making us misunderstand God. Everyone is now clean because of this new Word, the Word of Jesus Christ, that God has spoken. By means of his death Jesus cleaned us, made us pure so that we can enjoy the bath again. Oh, if I were to push this bath metaphor to the extreme, I'd have to say that in his fear William drowned me last night but because God loves me, he raised me from the dead to preach this morning. The Greek word for clean is *katharos* from which we get the word catheter. It means not just to clean the externals but more so to purge out the internals. As far as God is concerned with respect to us, he has never stopped loving us and in, through, and as Jesus Christ God has made us pure so that we can once again see and experience God as steadfastly loving and faithful instead of believing that horrible lie that we created about God

This morning we are baptizing Daniel William Wadley. In this God given act we are proclaiming that this child has been claimed by Jesus as his own as a participant in the new reality created by the Trinity. We are manifesting that Daniel is a participant in Jesus' death and resurrection and is alive anew in him. He just like you and I and every human being is a beloved child of God who by the free gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who binds him to Jesus, God the Son, the new Adam, he will for now and always share in the loving relationship that God the Son has with God the Father in the Holy Spirit.

This fact, this new reality that we are claiming as true for Daniel and the truth about humanity's relationship to God in Christ has implications for how we raise this child. First, we raise him not hoping he'll be a Christian, but rather as a Christian. He belongs to Jesus Christ. His life is not his own. This is true for everyone whether they want to see it and claim or not. Secondly, I say we must raise him and not just Carolyn and Allan, because in the Communion of the Holy Spirit we are all family in Christ. One of the greatest tasks we will share is not

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letting sin overcrowd Daniel’s vision because Satan will find horrible ways to make Daniel believe that God does not love him, that he is unimportant and unlovable. Satan will use our failures as the supposed evidence of the truth of his lies about God. So, as his family we must continually tell Daniel that he is a very much loved child of God accepted as he is and that he is always important. Anything else he might believe about himself is a lie. And, we must be on the lookout for those tale-telling signs that we have failed him and he is trying to believe the lie. God has entrusted us with the task of teaching him what love is and how to live his life compassionately with forgiveness in hand and our own example will be his greatest teacher. Finally and with much thanks, God has not abandoned us to carry out this task on our own. He’s still in the tub with us and he’s making the Bubbles. Amen.