

Baptism of Cooper James Johnson

St. Brandon's

Lamentations 3:22-33; Mark 5:21-43

27 June 2021

You'll know the expression, "A dog is for life, not just for Christmas". Well, in a similar way, baptism is for life, not just for today. Today we'll baptise Cooper, but we'll baptise him *for life*. And 'for life' in three ways: first in the obvious sense that this is something that is for the whole of his life on earth; second in the sense that 'for life' means life in all its fullness; and third in the sense that he is being baptised into eternal life – life not just in this world, but also in the world beyond this life.

Our two readings today aren't directly related to baptism, but they do tell us something about these three ways in which baptism is 'for life'. The context for our first reading from Lamentations was of a cataclysmic disaster which befell the Jewish nation when Jerusalem was razed and their Temple was turned into ruins. But in the middle of that disaster, when the worst that could possibly happen had happened, we find these amazing words: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end". And that tells us that whatever disasters may befall us in our lives, there is still hope because God's love still surrounds and holds us, God's steadfast love for us never ceases.

We don't know what will befall Cooper in his life, what tragedies as well as triumphs and joys there may be. What we do know is that as he is baptised today, so God promises to be with him in all the circumstances of his life, whatever they may be.

The woman in the middle of our second reading suffered from haemorrhages, but in the culture of those days that meant that she was also cut off from all human contact, even with her family, and she was ceremonially unclean so cut off from religion – what we would call today permanent self-isolation. So when Jesus healed her, he didn't just make her better *physically*, but probably *mentally* too (imagine her mental anguish), and gave her back her life *socially*, and drew her in to a relationship with Him that gave her life *spiritually*. That's life in all its fullness – physical, mental, social, spiritual.

We don't know what will befall Cooper in his life, what physical or mental or social or spiritual ailments he may suffer from. What we do know is that as he is baptised today, so God will always be at work in his life to heal him, to repair social relationships that may get broken, to offer a relationship with him that will give him life spiritually. God longs to give him life in all its fullness.

In the other story in our second reading, the daughter of Jairus, one of the leaders of the synagogue, was at the point of death. Indeed, she does die in the middle of the story. But to Jesus that was not the end. He ignored the jeers of those who refused to believe Him, and said, "Little girl, I say to you, arise".¹ He gave her back her very life. And while for her that applied to life in this world, we can also take this as a sign of eternal life – life in and then beyond this life.

We do know one thing that will befall Cooper in his life, and that is that he will someday die, just like the rest of us. But what we also know is that as he is baptised today, so death is not the end of life. God promises to give him back his life, to raise him to everlasting life.

¹ From the translation by Nicholas King.

We are about to baptise Cooper. As we do so, God promises to be with him throughout his life; God promises to give him life in all its fullness; God promises to give him eternal life. But just as baptism is 'for life' for him, so it is 'for life' for the rest of us. So, if you've been baptised, here is an opportunity to make or re-make those baptismal promises for yourself. And, if you've never been baptised, well it's for life so it's never too late.

Amen.