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"Given new life in the Holy Spirit" The Rev. Kara Leslie (05/19/2024, Pentecost)

Let us pray.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts  
be acceptable unto you, O Lord,  
and the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we pray.  
Amen.

Amen.

This morning, I want to start off with a couple of scenarios  
for you to think about.

You're on your first date, and you're wearing either  
white jeans or white dress, or maybe the guy has on a nice  
white shirt, and your date orders you a chili cheese dog  
with extra onions, and you're thinking,  
I could have just had a little simple plain chicken dish,  
no red sauce, and a fork and a knife.

That would be nice on a first date.

Or how about another one?

You're standing at the coffee place, getting coffee at work,  
and one of your coworkers walks in, and they're just blah,  
blah, blah, talking bad about everybody on the team.  
And all you really want to do is talk about your favorite  
new Taylor Swift song on her new album.

Or maybe this last semester, you tried, well,  
you wanted to relax.

You focused on relaxing, which meant sleeping a lot,  
missing classes a lot.

And now grades are coming in, and you're thinking,  
oh, maybe I shouldn't have done that.

And you're thinking, well, I'm still tired.

I should have just gone to class, because extra sleep  
doesn't really make any difference.

But maybe this one might apply to you.

You have gotten to your closet.

You found your Sunday shoes.

You've crammed your foot in and tied them up.

You're uncomfortable.

You come to church, but as soon as church is over,  
you're headed to the car where your flip flops  
are waiting for you.

Or as you're sitting in these hardwood brown pews,  
you're dreaming of your soft recliner  
with the massage button going on.

And the USB port where you don't even  
have to stretch or cause a drop of sweat  
as you plug it in so conveniently.  
In each of these scenarios, there is an uncomfortable option,  
and there is a more comfortable option.  
The things we do to be uncomfortable  
are exhausting and ever-present.  
These examples I've described are external ways  
that we find ourselves uncomfortable,  
but there are also ways that internally we are uncomfortable.  
We choose to hang on to what others teach us  
to believe about ourselves instead of listening  
to the voice of God.  
Or let the mirrors speak louder than our souls.  
Or maybe we've let what we've done wrong, not only today,  
but yesterday, but 10, 20 years ago,  
be the ball and chain that guide our whole lives.  
Truthfully, some of us enjoy swimming  
and the cesspool of sin.  
So this morning, this radiant, glorious morning,  
this Pentecost Sunday where we celebrate baptism,  
I want to remind us that we are renewed in the Holy Spirit  
and that we are made ever more to rejoice  
in His holy comfort of Christ, that we are made to ever more  
rejoice in the holy comfort of Christ.  
Today, we are going to baptize two children  
and to the body of Christ.  
What a celebration for little Penelope over there.  
Yes, I said your name, hi, Penelope.  
And then also Kayley.  
Kayley.  
There she is.  
Hi, Kayley.  
Hi.  
We are baptizing these two children  
and their parents are into this family  
and each of us into the church family.  
We are remembering our baptism.  
It's also Pentecost, the day when the Holy Spirit came down  
upon the people to comfort the people with the spirit of truth.  
Now, some of you might notice that there's a lot of people  
wearing red.  
This is not an invasion of the red raiders.  
I promise you.  
Rather, it red symbolizes that flames rested  
on the tongues of the people.  
So let me share the story.  
The disciples are gathered in a house  
and the wind busts through the windows and the doors  
where they were all sitting.

It is consuming and it's scary.  
Like you right now sitting here, they were gathered  
and the wind tore open the doors and the windows.  
The fiery tongues come and rest on the disciples  
and it is so loud that there are people outside  
that come to gather.  
They want to know what's going on  
and they are amazed and astonished.  
Our scripture says,  
so all these devout people have gathered from many places  
which meant that they had different clothes on  
which meant that they had different sandals.  
They tied them differently.  
They had different facial features and habits  
and languages.  
Imagine a large, loud crowd of people,  
the wind blowing, the dust blowing everywhere,  
their garments being tossed, their hair flowing this way,  
and the disturbing sounds of many tongues  
being spoken at the same time.  
The energy is exciting, the chaos is contagious  
and the sounds are scary.  
Even with all the many languages being spoken,  
those who gathered could hear what is being said  
in their own language and what do they hear?  
They hear about God's deeds of power.  
They hear about how Jesus Christ, the Son of God,  
came down to be with the people, to lead them  
and was sending the Holy Spirit to continue  
to guide them in their lives.  
They hear about forgiveness and mercy.  
They hear about the law of love, not the law,  
the Old Testament.  
Peter, some accuse them of drinking  
and Peter says, it's 9 a.m.  
Lord knows nobody drinks before 9 a.m.  
Peter seems a bit miffed about this.  
So he stands up and he's looking around  
and he screams really, really loud.  
Like that momma voice when everything is hit in the fan.  
And so they scream out, or Peter screams out.  
And he invites them to listen to him.  
And he begins by saying, I want to tell you  
about the what the prophet Joel said.  
Joel said, God declares, I will pour my spirit upon all flesh,  
male, female, slave, free, young, old,  
not a single person will be left out  
from the gift of the Holy Spirit.  
So what does that mean for us here today?  
It means you don't have to have it all together.

It means that you don't have to be perfect  
and it means that you don't have to constantly  
get on that rat wheel, trying to prove your worth,  
trying to make sure you're got it right,  
so God will love you.  
Let me flip it and say it in a positive way.  
God has chosen to comfort you,  
each and every one of you, because God loves you.  
We are made, we are made to rejoice  
in the everlasting holy comfort of Jesus.  
Comfort my friends, not judgment,  
comfort in grace, not sin,  
comfort in love that is always unconditional.  
On Friday morning, I went to office depot  
after going to the gym.  
Not many people go to office depot on Friday.  
It was me and one other person,  
and we seemed to, we passed down this one aisle  
and I sort of recognized them,  
but then I got what I needed  
and I came up to the checkout  
and shortly he came up to.  
He was pushing his little ruby stroller  
that he had used to walk and he came up  
and he was right behind me.  
And I said, sir, how are you today?  
He said, fine.  
I said, please tell me how I know you,  
because I knew his eyes, but I could not place him.  
And he lowered his eyes and a huge grin  
that came upon his face and he said, one word, clear.  
Automatically, I went to room 218  
and one of our local care homes.  
He was the husband of one of the women  
that I would go sit and pray with.  
He would bring her scrambled eggs  
and triangle toast with grape jam on it,  
hoping that she would eat a little bit.  
And she did, but then he thought he could do better  
and he wanted her to eat more.  
So he made a hard fried egg with lots of salt  
and even more pepper and another piece of triangle toast  
with strawberry jam.  
And she would slowly eat, but then her desire for food stopped.  
He would still come and sit there for hours  
by her side while she slept and declined.  
And the sun would come in on his face and on her.  
And I would go and sit and we would pray and we would laugh  
and he would tell me old stories  
about how they had lived their life

raising three boys with lots of curve balls.  
Those are some of the things that I remembered.  
But what he remembered, not only today or yesterday,  
or the day before was all the comfort of their love together.  
He knew exactly how many days she had been gone.  
He knew exactly to the day how long they had been married.  
Almost 60 years, minus two months, minus 10 days.  
He knew how long they dated.  
So he really counted it a 60 plus marriage  
because they had dated for over a year  
before they got married.  
Those are the things that he was rejoicing in.  
And he invited me there as we stood in the checkout line  
just us two with the attendant there  
who couldn't have been 20.  
Listening to this man talk about love that he had  
three times her age.  
He shared with me the comfort, the sacred love  
that he had for Claire.  
And today I share this story with you two  
because it is powerful, the comfort of love,  
the comfort of the Holy Spirit.  
And today as we come to bad ties,  
Kaylee and Penelope, we invite them  
into the comfort of the Holy Spirit.  
We will anoint them in the name of the Father,  
the Son, and the ever present Holy Spirit.  
It will be with them always.  
Baptism is a sacrament in which we are made members  
of Christ's body.  
Maybe you have ever seen a rose that has been grafted.  
So you take the flesh and you make crosses  
and you put on the other flesh  
and you pray and you hope it grows.  
Well today we are grafting onto the body of Christ,  
onto our body, Penelope and Kaylee.  
They will be baptized in the water that has been blessed.  
They will be anointed with the sign of a cross  
with the oil of chrysalm and they will be handed,  
or not them, but their Godparents will be handed  
the light of Christ.  
Now these are all outward signs,  
but let me tell you what's happening on the inside.  
Through the baptism, these two beautiful children of God,  
along with all the rest of us, children of God,  
will be union and union with Christ, death, and resurrection.  
Christ died, but that wasn't the last part  
of his story.  
He was raised from the dead and so are we  
when it is our time.

Two, we are born into God's family and the church.  
This is what happens on the inside.  
We are forgiven, forgiven, forgiven, forgiven,  
and forgiven over and over again.  
And then finally we are given new life in the Holy Spirit.  
We are made to evermore rejoice in his holy comfort.  
Now you might be thinking as you look around here,  
there's a lot going on over here,  
but let me tell you, it is so small  
in comparison what's going on inside  
Penelope and Kaley and each and every one of us.  
Amen.  
Amen.