



## **Sermons from Northwood United Church**

**“A letter to you on the day of your baptism”**

**Matthew 28:1-10**

**Will Sparks Easter Sunday, April 20, 2014**

**May the words of my mouth, the meditations of our hearts, and the actions of our lives be acceptable in your sight O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen**

**Dear Emma, Jeremiah, and Ju Young.**

**I know, this seems like a strange letter already because it is to the three of you and as yet you really don't know each other. But I am hoping that by the time you read this letter on your own, with your own reading ability, that you will know the names and the people that share with you this letter. You share a day in common, the day of your baptism.**

**I am writing you this letter for your baptism day to try tell you what it means to the gathered people here that you are here, and that you are being baptized.**

**I want to start by saying a few words about the people who brought you here, your parents. Although there will be times when you will question this with great vigour, they love you deeply, and they are kind of in awe of you. Please be kind to them, even though at times it will feel like they don't deserve it. You need to understand that "grownups" is a difficult stage of life they are going through. They are likely nervous and excitable and confused by all the new things they are going through. Keep in mind (and I know this is hard to imagine) that your parents were children a very long time ago. Incredible eh? So please be patient with them and understanding in spite of the foolish things they do. And one day you might just wake up and discover to your utter amazement that you are a parent too.**

**But your parents are not the only ones here at your baptism. There is a whole community here that is gathered around you. Some people have traveled some distance to be here today, on the day of your baptism. And there are people who are thinking about you in other places today as well. In fact this community is gathered all over the world today. Likely in every place you will go in your life there will be people who have gathered today, not just for your baptism, but for other people's baptism and because it is Easter, a day to celebrate the power of God to bring us back to life. We are a community that believes in that power, and although I will come back to that later, I want you to know that we were here, and that this worldwide community is here for you, greets you on this day, celebrates the amazing reality that you are in this world. Sometimes we are a weird bunch. Sometimes, like your parents, we do foolish things, say foolish things. We are human too, just like you. Sometimes we make remarkable mistakes. But know at the heart of it all, our intent is to love you, and we promise to never give up trying to do that.**

**Jeremiah, Emma, Ju Young, I thought you should know that our habit as a community is to baptize infants and children, like you. Oh, sometimes we baptize adults, but mostly it is children, at the beginning of this wondrous adventure of life. And so one of the things that we experience as we look at you is utter amazement. You see there was a time when you were not here, and we had no idea of the space that was empty that is now filled with you. But now, we can't imagine life without you here, and that is an amazing experience. Another thing we do right now is imagining the life that is in front of you. That too is kind of staggering, and exciting, and honestly, a little bit scary. We have experienced**

the happiness, and joy, the struggle and heartbreak of life. And we know so little of what you will experience in your lifetime. The world is changing and there are difficult days ahead. You more than us will have to deal with climate change. You will likely have to figure out how to resolve conflicts that we can't imagine yet. And you will discover things that we know nothing about. So we look at you, and we imagine your life, and we feel small and we find ourselves praying, "God take care of this precious one, and all the precious ones." And then we find ourselves saying to God, "Ok God, I need your help to make this world a more habitable place, a more peaceful place, a more just and loving place for this precious one." And on the day of your baptism, we promise again to do everything we can.

Now Ju Young, and Emma and Jeremiah, your baptism day happens also to be Easter, a day when we, the followers of Jesus, celebrate the power of God to pull a spectacular fast one on the powers that would control life for their own selfish ends. And that is no coincidence, because we believe that that same holy power lives in you- lives in each of us- lives most vividly and powerfully in us together. You see the one whose life and teachings we are trying to follow, Jesus, confronted those powers, but he did it in a very particular way. He gathered friends together and together they learned how to live in tune with a love that is at the very heart of Life itself. And incredibly, when they did this, they became the target of fearful forces that wanted that power for themselves. In fact, those very forces tried to control Jesus and his followers, and when they found that they couldn't control them, they killed him. And they thought that would be the end of it.

But it wasn't, because it never can be. God, love, the lover, the power of love cannot be killed. Our deepest prayer today is that you discover this, because it will save your life over and over and over again. Oh, people die. Many precious things die. You will discover this hard and painful part of living. And sometimes it will not feel fair or right in any way. But this week we have remembered what happened to Jesus because he too died in a most unfair way. God knows it is devastating. But we remember Jesus today because God did not let the powers of control and fear and death have the last word. No, love gets the last word. This world does not belong to the powers that would use it for their own ends. No, this world belongs to God. You belong to God.

And so, Emma, Jeremiah, Ju Young, as you head out into this wondrous, amazing adventure of life, we pray that you will always know, at every turn of the road, that at the heart of life there is a love, an ancient, beautiful, achingly vulnerable, endlessly tenacious, and hugely powerful love that holds your life. And this love shines in every crook and corner of the world you will ever find yourself in, if you have eyes to see it. This love will outlast any dark night, and will be a beacon to guide you if you let it. Never give up on this love, because this love will never give up on you. And that is a promise. Amen