

Dogs Don't Have Cats

May 15, 2016

Romans 8:14-17

Brenda has told this story many times. Some years ago, she shared with her boss a report of the travails of parenting. Perhaps he wasn't the most sensitive fellow on the planet. Perhaps he had heard the tales of woe once too often. At the end of the story he made one comment. "Well, you know, Brenda—dogs don't have cats."

We all come from somewhere—and someone. Whether we know it or not, we bear the evidence of those origins. Dogs don't have cats.

"All who are led by the Spirit of God," Paul writes in Romans eight, *"are children of God."* We who draw our identity and energy, our life and love from God's Holy Spirit—we hear the evidence of those origins. Dogs don't have cats.

This is the Day of Pentecost. We remember the first time God's Holy Spirit blew Resurrection Life into the Church.

That was the *first* Day of Pentecost. But it was not the *only* Day of Pentecost. Spend some time working just through the Book of Acts. You will see Pentecost happen over and over. The Holy Spirit engulfs a group of Samaritans. An Ethiopian eunuch asks for baptism and goes on his way rejoicing. Paul is knocked flat, blinded by the light, and raised up to lead the church. A Roman centurion and his family get it. And then the Good News about Jesus spreads like a holy fire.

Every day was Pentecost Day.

And so is today. Pentecost is happening in the hearts of Killion and Caeli, of Kinsley and Emily. In a few moments, I will pray for each of them. "Sustain [this child] with the gift of your Holy Spirit..."

That gift will have seven expressions: "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence..." You may recall that numbers matter in Scripture. Seven of anything means completion, fulfillment, and finality. These children will receive every bit of faith, hope and love Jesus can give them.

And that gift remains with them, we pray, "both now and forever."

"All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God." Dog's don't have cats. Pentecost is happening today before our very eyes.

Now where we start says much about where we end. We start this Pentecost life as we pass through the waters of baptism. Paul knows this sacrament takes us back to the waters of the Red Sea.

The ancient Hebrews passed through the waters from Egyptian bondage to freedom with God. They escaped the “spirit of slavery” that trapped them in fear. They received the spirit of adoption—becoming God’s beloved children—that freed them to live.

This story was a preview of our own baptismal journeys. We are baptized into Jesus’ death and resurrection. We plunge into the waters so that death can die. We come out of the waters raised to life that cannot end. “*For you have died,*” Paul writes in Colossians three, verse three, “*and your life is hid with Christ in God.*”

Where we start says much about where we end. Today we give these children their beginning in the life of the Holy Spirit. As we do this, we know how it will end. “*Nothing in all of creation,*” Paul writes in Romans eight, verse thirty-nine, “*will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

We know how it ends. Dogs don’t have cats. The Holy Spirit creates and sustains beloved children of God who live the Jesus life now and forever.

Every day is Pentecost Day. How did Jesus sustain you with his Holy Spirit this week? How did he lead you from fear to faith? How did he lead you from confusion to clarity? How did he lead you from suffering to glory? These are the promises found in Romans eight today.

There is one final principle at work here. You might have missed Paul’s words in verse seventeen: “*and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...*” In baptism we **benefit** from God’s salvation. We also **bear** that salvation to a dying world.

We surround parents who have been gifted with beautiful children. Will we help lead those children to deeper faith in Jesus? We have been gifted with one hundred twenty five years of faith, hope and love here at Emanuel Lutheran Church. Will we serve with even greater faith, hope and love in the coming years? We have the opportunity to be the beating heart of this part of Council Bluffs. Will we embrace that joyful challenge?

“*All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.*” Dogs don’t have cats. What is the Holy Spirit bringing to life in and through you this week? Let’s pray...

Pastor Lowell Hennigs
Emanuel Lutheran Church
Council Bluffs, Iowa