

Every day I drop Evan off for daycare the first thing we do is wash his hands.

It's an important part of his little routine.

Wash up. Get sunscreen applied. Sit down for second breakfast.

(Yes in a move that would make the Hobbits of JRR Tolkien's classic tales proud,
Evan slides into his seat for second breakfast.)

He starts each day washed and fed.

And we recognize the importance of both those realities.

For Evan to grow and learn and be the delightful little guy he is,
full of bubbly laughter and sneaky smiles,
full of sweet words and kind gestures,
he needs to be washed and fed.

We recognize the importance of washing and feeding.

We gently scrub little babies in the kitchen sink as the coo and sigh (or
occasionally scream bloody murder).
Either way they receive this gentle loving touch,
we continue to hold them in the safety and security of the love that holds us
all.

We gather around tables to enjoy good food,
food that feeds our bodies and gives us strength for the day, while
conversation flows to feed our souls.

These precious moments are important for us.
They impart love and create belong for us.
They help us slow down and remember what really matters in life.

They remind us that life is a gift and it's given to us.

So, it should come as little surprise that washing and feeding lie at the heart of our faith.

There are two great mysteries we hold with open hands and wondering hearts.

Mysteries that invite us to marvel at the abundant, surprising love of God for us.

Mysteries that leave us lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Mysteries that remind us who and whose we are.

We call baptism and communion sacraments.

They are signs--visible, tangible moments--

Moments filled with sights, sounds, smells--

Moments rich with texture and meaning--

Moments full of promises--

Moments that give us a window into grace God has for each of us.

As it was once said, baptism and communion are a visible sign of an invisible grace.

And I think it's this visible, tangible nature that makes these mysteries of our faith such powerful tools for forming and shaping us.

They have this power to draw us in.

I love watching the way this happens with children.

In one congregation I know, it is the custom to baptize from the center.

Their font is easily moved and their aisles are wide enough to accommodate pastor and family;

pastor and those being born anew into the family of God;

Those brave and trembling souls being presented before the family of faith

dying with Christ;
being buried with Christ,
and rising to the new life we all have in Christ.

As one child was baptized her parents were presented with a lit candle--
A symbol of the light and love of God now burning in her,
Shining brightly for all to see.

As we many children, this precious little one was drawn to this light.
She reached out for it, her little hands open and feeling.
While, she was just drawn to the shining, flickering flame,
at another level, she was grasping for the love that makes her whole.

After a short prayer, the pastor dips a branch of hyssop into the waters of
life.

Then the waters of life are flung over the family of God--
a family bound together by water that proves to be thicker than blood.
It is a sight to see people leaning into this blessing,
Resting in showering blessing of God's love.

In the words of one preacher, "baptism is quite heroic."

"If you want a life of ease, pleasure, and success, a gated and protected life
among your own, then the last thing you want to be is baptized. If,
however, you want a life full of real meaning and lasting purpose, the kind
of life God wants us to live, the kind of life, in Jesus, God shows us how to
live; if you want a life that is not ephemeral but eternal, a life not just for
now but forever, life as it is going to be when God completes his work in
progress, life that begins even now, in the sacrament of baptism that
proclaims the old world going and a new world coming, and calls us to live
tomorrow's life today – then you've come to just the right pace, you're
taking part in just the right occasion, you're watching a sneak preview of the
end of time as we know it, and the beginning of time as you couldn't
imagine it in your wildest dreams."

Baptism is precious, sweet, and heroic.
It reminds us of who and whose we are.
We are children of God.
We are known and loved.
We are part of the family of God.

And families often gather around tables.
So, we move from font to table.
Washed to fed.

The table is a place of memories.
We gather around tables with those who are family and those who have
become family.
We gather around tables and stories pour out.
We gather around tables and remember the events that have made us who
we are.

We gather around our family table and remember that Jesus invites us all to
share in the goodness and grace of this feast.

And this feast has the power to transform our hearts and our lives.
Like the other tables we gather around,
this table nourishes us and strengthens us for life.

This table opens before us the promise of God to provide; to give us love
without measure.

Sara Miles story.

What happened a few minutes later is a mystery. I still can't explain my
first Communion; it made no sense. I was in tears and physically
unbalanced: I felt as if I had just stepped off a curb, or been knocked over,
painlessly, from behind. The disconnect between what I thought was
happening—I was eating a piece of bread; what I heard someone else say
was happening—the piece of bread was the “body” of “Christ,” a patently

untrue, or at best metaphorical statement; and what I knew was happening—God, named “Christ” or “Jesus,” was real, and in my mouth—utterly short-circuited my ability to do anything but cry.

Washed and fed we are part of the family of God.

In worship,
as we celebrate these sacraments--
these visible, tangible signs of God’s love and grace.
They draw us into the story of God’s life and love.
They form and shape us into a family not of blood,
but bound by water,
gathered around a table of love to share our family stories.

These moments strengthen our souls.
These moments give us a glimpse of the life God intends for all the world.

These moments inspire us to be people who go out and share all the goodness and love that washes over us, is broken and shared with us, is poured out and into us.

Washed and fed.
Washed and fed.
Amen.