

Mom, Dad, big sister, big brother, godparents, grandparents, friends, family, the faithful gathered around: so many people are excited about today's baptism.

Luke is not one of them.

The gospel writer barely mentions that Jesus was baptized and doesn't focus in on him until after he's done and dried off, when he is praying...then it is that the heavens open, the Spirit descends, the Voice speaks.

It is when Jesus is praying that the real action happens, that God visits and speaks.

Birth may be exciting, but the real action happens with parenthood.

Baptism makes a splash, but it is the relationship that follows, the prayer, the conversation and interaction with God in the days to come that are the real focus.

A wise colleague of mine was fond of telling people bringing their babies to be baptized:

The question behind baptism is not *what if the baby dies?*; it's really *what if the baby lives?*

The promises spoken by the parents and the godparents and the community surrounding and supporting them are there to cover just such an emergency.

How will Janette know that she is God's daughter, the beloved, with whom God is well pleased?

All the people got baptized but apparently only Jesus heard the voice.

Perhaps Jesus only heard it because he was praying, which is to say, he was paying attention.

Who will teach Janette to do that?

Who will teach her, in word and in example, to pray, to listen, to open herself to the voice and the vision of God?

What if the baby lives?

When Martin Luther and his colleagues asked people why they had their children baptized, roughly 100% of those interviewed responded, "The priest said, if we don't, she'll go to hell."

Christianity had been reduced from lifestyle to term-life, from following Jesus to fire insurance.

Luther wrote his Small Catechism, that classic primer on the basics of the Christian faith which is printed in the back of our cranberry hymnals and seared into the memories of many longsuffering Lutheran confirmation students, in response to this depressing survey of the fearful.

He wanted to teach people that following Christ is a way of life, not a hedge against death.

Sure, it's true, if the baby dies, she won't burn in hell.

But what if she lives?

The most likely answer, of course, is that she'll burn here.

Baptism is not fire insurance, which in this case is particularly disappointing, since both Janette's Dad and her Godfather are firemen.

They are, in fact, the same firemen who faithfully stand guard here at Resurrection every Easter vigil, to protect our worried neighbors from the danger to which we expose the neighborhood with our outdoor votive candles.

These are the brave and notoriously handsome men who dress in full gear and secure our perimeter as potential disaster flickers ominously in sand filled lunch bags. They were hoping to be off duty this morning, hoping the pastor would handle the magic water so that they could relax, but the story of baptized, beloved Jesus tells us that there is hot danger ahead.

His hometown synagogue will try to kill him in chapter four, after his first sermon. After a lot more crossfire, the Romans will kill him in chapter twenty-three in that four alarm fire that is the cross.

Whatever baptism is, it is not fire insurance.
We say that the newly baptized put on Christ; maybe Janette should put on her dad's uniform instead.

John warned us: *I baptize you with water; but...he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

It is the church's experience that John was right.
The baptism of the church itself at Pentecost was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit who appeared not as a gentle bird but as tongues of fire and a sound like the rush of a violent wind, like one that tears apart wheat and chaff when they tossed together into the air by the one with the winnowing fork.

If anything, baptism leads us into trouble, not out of it.
Jesus' calling as beloved child of God pushed him to become a preacher of perilous truth. The stories of the early church are full of faithful disciples landing in prison, which in fact is where John the Baptist himself disappears to in those unread gospel verses, and some of Jesus' followers like Stephen are martyred for the faith.

Those baptismal promises sound innocuous enough, but really start serving all people and striving for justice and peace in all the earth and claiming that Christ is more important than money and other idols and just see how far you get before you need a fire suit.

Janette won't have to go to hell to get burned; there's plenty of opportunity right here.
And the Holy Spirit, which drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan and drove those early Christians into places no reasonable person would think to go and now comes to haunt Janette, is a wind that only fans the flames and makes the holy fire worse.

*But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Janette,
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...
You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you...
Do not fear, for I am with you.*

When you walk through fire: not if, but when.

When you walk through fire... the One baptized with all the people, the One who passed through the waters with you, the Holy One of Israel, will be with you.
He has already been to hell and back.
He has already lived and died and lived to tell about it.
He has sweated, suffered, bled, and been burned.
He will not lead you around the fire but he will carry you through it.
Do not fear, beloved child of God.
There is no fire that can burn hotter or longer than the love in God's heart that speaks your name.

Mom, Dad, big sister, big brother, godparents, grandparents, friends, family, the faithful gathered around: so many people are excited about today's baptism.

Luke is not one of them.

The gospel writer barely mentions that Jesus was baptized and doesn't focus in on him until after he's done and dried off, when he is praying...then it is that the heavens open, the Spirit descends, the Voice speaks.

It is when Jesus is praying that the real action happens, that God visits and speaks.

Birth may be exciting, but the real action happens with parenthood.

Baptism makes a splash, but it is the relationship that follows, the prayer, the conversation and interaction with God in the days to come that are the real focus.

A wise colleague of mine was fond of telling people bringing their babies to be baptized:

The question behind baptism is not *what if the baby dies?*; it's really *what if the baby lives?*

The promises spoken by the parents and the godparents and the community surrounding and supporting them are there to cover just such an emergency.

How will Janette know that she is God's daughter, the beloved, with whom God is well pleased?

All the people got baptized but apparently only Jesus heard the voice.

Perhaps Jesus only heard it because he was praying, which is to say, he was paying attention.

Who will teach Janette to do that?

Who will teach her, in word and in example, to pray, to listen, to open herself to the voice and the vision of God?

What if the baby lives?

When Martin Luther and his colleagues asked people why they had their children baptized, roughly 100% of those interviewed responded, "The priest said, if we don't, she'll go to hell."

Christianity had been reduced from lifestyle to term-life, from following Jesus to fire insurance.

Luther wrote his Small Catechism, that classic primer on the basics of the Christian faith which is printed in the back of our cranberry hymnals and seared into the memories of many longsuffering Lutheran confirmation students, in response to this depressing survey of the fearful.

He wanted to teach people that following Christ is a way of life, not a hedge against death.

Sure, it's true, if the baby dies, she won't burn in hell.

But what if she lives?

The most likely answer, of course, is that she'll burn here.

Baptism is not fire insurance, which in this case is particularly disappointing, since both Janette's Dad and her Godfather are firemen.

They are, in fact, the same firemen who faithfully stand guard here at Resurrection every Easter vigil, to protect our worried neighbors from the danger to which we expose the neighborhood with our outdoor votive candles.

These are the brave and notoriously handsome men who dress in full gear and secure our perimeter as potential disaster flickers ominously in sand filled lunch bags. They were hoping to be off duty this morning, hoping the pastor would handle the magic water so that they could relax, but the story of baptized, beloved Jesus tells us that there is hot danger ahead.

His hometown synagogue will try to kill him in chapter four, after his first sermon. After a lot more crossfire, the Romans will kill him in chapter twenty-three in that four alarm fire that is the cross.

Whatever baptism is, it is not fire insurance.
We say that the newly baptized put on Christ; maybe Janette should put on her dad's uniform instead.

John warned us: *I baptize you with water; but...he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

It is the church's experience that John was right.
The baptism of the church itself at Pentecost was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit who appeared not as a gentle bird but as tongues of fire and a sound like the rush of a violent wind, like one that tears apart wheat and chaff when they tossed together into the air by the one with the winnowing fork.

If anything, baptism leads us into trouble, not out of it.
Jesus' calling as beloved child of God pushed him to become a preacher of perilous truth. The stories of the early church are full of faithful disciples landing in prison, which in fact is where John the Baptist himself disappears to in those unread gospel verses, and some of Jesus' followers like Stephen are martyred for the faith.

Those baptismal promises sound innocuous enough, but really start serving all people and striving for justice and peace in all the earth and claiming that Christ is more important than money and other idols and just see how far you get before you need a fire suit.

Janette won't have to go to hell to get burned; there's plenty of opportunity right here.
And the Holy Spirit, which drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan and drove those early Christians into places no reasonable person would think to go and now comes to haunt Janette, is a wind that only fans the flames and makes the holy fire worse.

*But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Janette,
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...
You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you...
Do not fear, for I am with you.*

When you walk through fire: not if, but when.

When you walk through fire... the One baptized with all the people, the One who passed through the waters with you, the Holy One of Israel, will be with you.
He has already been to hell and back.
He has already lived and died and lived to tell about it.
He has sweated, suffered, bled, and been burned.
He will not lead you around the fire but he will carry you through it.
Do not fear, beloved child of God.
There is no fire that can burn hotter or longer than the love in God's heart that speaks your name.