

# A Sermon for DaySpring

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“For Casen and Emily Ann”

I Timothy 6: 11-16

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The days when we baptize are always the best days. And today we're Baptizing two young ladies, Emily Anne Moore and Casen Brown. It's a great day... the best of Sundays because all roads of Christian faith lead to and from Baptism. It's the round house of Christian faith. So many connections... connections to

The Biblical Story...

Jesus in the Jordan...

The Tradition of the Church...

To a human being and their unique journey into faith.

There's such a convergence of meaning, memory and of reality in Baptism. And of story. There's a person's life, and because of that, each baptism is unique, because each soul is--and every human story a unique expression of the Divine Being. No two stories of faith are alike. But they all begin with the water.

Do you remember your Baptism? That's often the exhortation given when someone is baptized. **“Remember your Baptism!”** Do you?

I was nine years old when the Reverend Carl Duck baptized me at Lakeside Baptist Church. (The whole Duck at Lakeside thing escaped me at the time but now it seems sort of providentially funny.)

I remember my Baptism...

what it meant to me then.

It was a big deal.

I'd always known God and had been experiencing God's love for me and the story of God's love for me in Jesus. I knew that I needed to make a response to that... but I wanted it to be on my own time. The preacher had come by a few years earlier to put the baptismal squeeze on me. That sort of backfired. I waited. And when my family joined Lakeside Baptist Church in Dallas, I said it was time and I waded into the water with Dr. Duck and was baptized.

As I remember my Baptism, I remember some feelings...

Some relief...

A sense that I was on the inside now...

A part of something very important.

The next day at school in Mrs. Dietz's class, I remember being conscious now that I was among the baptized and needed to behave.

I wonder what you'd point to and tell us about as you remembered your baptism. Your declared entrance into the faith would be unique... I know it would.

Would you remember what the water felt like? What it felt like to go under and wonder if you'd be coming back up? I remember that...

Maybe who was there and how they marked that moment.

Would you remember the emotion and drama that proceeded it... some revival perhaps... clinched hands finally letting go of the pew during the 7<sup>th</sup> verse of “Just as I Am.”

Would you... do you remember who baptized you? What he or she said?

Was it freeing? Did you feel clean?

Was it mystical? Did you see something?

Or was it just very normal... another moment in the pilgrimage?

There would be nuances that are unique to your story but there is something that is true for all of us who have waded into those waters. **We made our confession of faith in Christ.**

Some of us spoke literal words of confession aloud.

Or maybe someone spoke them for us.

Or perhaps it was just understood by the community  
and baptism was the language.

**I belong to Christ... Jesus is Lord.** We said it... even if we didn't totally understand it... or perhaps even all... not yet anyway.

That's what we share in that moment with every Christian. Go back... go back... through the centuries and the echo you hear from fiberglass baptismals and swimming pools and creeks and cow troughs and lakes and oceans... and from fonts... is THE GREAT CONFESSION. **Christ is Lord... Christ is Lord.** This is what we say and do.

In our epistle reading today, in fact, Paul reminds young Timothy that he once made such a confession. Picture Paul there... probably standing next to a young teenager in some spring fed pond. The church is all gathered round. They sing a hymn or two and then...

Paul says to the young man in a loud “preacher voice”... **“Timothy, do you believe that Jesus is Lord?”**

And Timothy responds with adolescent fervor and cracking affirmation, **“Yes sir!”**

**“And is it your commitment today to follow him?”**

**“Yes sir!”**

**“Then Timothy, based upon your public profession of faith, I baptize you, my brother in Christ, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”**

And down he went... and up he came.

And it's some years later... Now Timothy is a young adult... a pastor... and he writes Paul and questions him and confides in him.

**“How do I do this and how do I do that?”**

**I'm having trouble with so and so.**

**Sometimes... I just seem too human...**

**I'm impatient...I sin”**

And Paul writes back. And among other things... Paul reminds Timothy of that day he stood in the spring-fed pond. The day he said aloud, **“Christ is Lord.”** That day, **“When he made his good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”**

There was on that day, something Timothy said about Jesus and about himself. There was something proclaimed... as there will be on this day.

When Emily Anne and Casen stand in our Baptistry they will be saying to us all, **“I believe in Jesus.”** And they’ll also be declaring that they belong to Him... **“I will follow his way.”**

They will be saying something to us. And we in turn will be saying something to them as we baptize them. And it is “we” who do this... the church. We baptize in the name of, in the presence of the Father, Son, and Spirit. And as we do we will be calling them to something in particular—to lived life in all its fullness in Christ.

**“Take hold,”** Paul says to Timothy, **“of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your confession.”**

Eternal Life, take hold of it. Eternal life... not simply some pearly place or some over-yonder duration... But a kind of life with a capital L... a way of being that has it’s center in a higher realm.

Where there are different rules and values...

Where there is a deeper engagement with the truth...

A greater capacity for love...

A peace that passes all understanding.

A grace known and passed on.

A unity... where walls just dissolve.

Eternal life, this is what we call you to at your confession--where there are no more illusions or shadows. Where the blinders come off and wings to fly are put on. Eternal life, where we finally know as we are known. And we are all that humanity was always to be.

That’s what Timothy was called to when he came up from the water dripping wet. He shakes his hair dry and Paul says, **“Timothy, now you belong to Jesus and through Christ you are on a journey to that which is eternal and ultimate and true.”**

Maybe Paul had said the words that day but he was issuing the invitation on behalf of Christ. As he is today... especially Casen and Emily Anne... this day. The invitation is to follow Him... all the way.

To do what he did...

To love as he loved...

To surrender as he surrendered.

Knowing his death and resurrection... over and over... in so many ways... in ways you cannot begin to imagine.

And finally to become like Him... in ways you cannot begin to imagine.

This is the calling and the destiny of the baptized... all of us. One watery “yes”... which will lead to a million more. Or at least it can. And that is the calling we issue again today to you... Emily Anne... and to you, Casen. Keep saying yes... and take hold of all Life is meant to be.

This is your calling... your destiny... as followers of Jesus.

Thanks be to God.