

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

One of my favorite TV shows is ABC's Extreme Makeover Home Edition. This show helps a family who is living in a home that is unsafe for them. It might be that the house is full of mold or a family member needs a special heating and air conditioning unit because of a health condition or something else. The crew comes to the home, gets to interact with the family and learn their likes and dislikes before building them a new home.

I enjoy this show because of the many gifts that people give the families who are receiving a new home. Many, many people from the community come and help demolish the old house, build, paint, and move furniture into the new one. There is a sense of serving the neighbor and a reward for being able to help someone in need. Families are given hope.

Even though I enjoy this show, I often wonder what happens to these families once the project is completed.

A family may receive a new home, a lot of help, and other great things, but in time these things change. The memory of how things came to be will always be there, but walls will need painted, cars will need repaired, and other things will break and need to be fixed.

Earthly things come and go. In baptism we are claimed by God. We are born of water and spirit. Each and everyday we are God's children. Nothing can change what God has done for each and every one of us.

What does it mean that Christians are people born of water and spirit? We have hope. We have hope in what God has done for us. By water and spirit we are made children of God. We are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

The waters of our lives vary. They can be calm and peaceful. Things just seem to be going along as good as can be. The waters can also be like riding a wave. We have a lot of excitement and energy – maybe it's because we received good news, or a gift, or a new house. But like a wave, it builds gradually, rises, and falls.

The waters can also be turbulent. Things happen that make our lives miserable. We may be sick, someone we love may be dying, or a relationship might be ending. The rough waters in our lives eventually change and recede.

Now the best part...the waters of baptism and the Holy Spirit never recede. God's love is showered upon us day after day. The waters surround us as we journey through life as God's children.

We are a people of hope because of the grace and love that God gives us. What do we do with that hope? In the gospel text for today, Jesus enters into a conversation with Nicodemus trying to teach him about the Son of Man and believing in him. Part of this conversation is Jesus telling Nicodemus that he doesn't receive his testimony of what he has seen or heard. Jesus challenges

Nicodemus to recognize why he came – that is to be lifted up so that whoever believes in him will have eternal life. Jesus gave Nicodemus something to think about.

As disciples, God challenges us to see and live our lives in response to his grace and love. One way to do this is to share how you see and feel God acting in your life with someone else. By telling others about our relationship with God we plant seeds that the Spirit grows. God's love and promises for all people never fade.

Jesus challenged Nicodemus and planted a seed. In the gospel of John, Nicodemus returns to help Joseph of Arimathea anoint Jesus' body for burial. Maybe he understood Jesus' message and believed in him.

We can share with others how great it is to be called and claimed by God in the waters of baptism and that those waters never recede. As a people of hope we can live our lives to show God's love. We can tell about the greatest gift...that God gave his only Son so that we might have life.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding through Christ Jesus the Lord.
Amen.