

## **HE DIED WITH CHRIST: HE WILL BE RAISED TO LIFE ETERNAL!**

Our sermon for this twentieth Saturday of the Trinity season is drawn from this day's readings. This special time of year is when we remember the life of Christ as it is lived through the members of His Body, the Church. Today, Jesus comes to us through His Word as we hear in and through it of His calling Caleb Jackson Kiracofe to eternal life in Christ. Hear the Word again as we remember the Faith God gave and sustained in him:

*Do you all not continue to know that as many of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, into the death of Him we have been baptized? Therefore, we have been buried together with Him through the Baptism into the death that, just as He was raised from (the) dead through the glory of the Father, thus also we, in new life, might continue to walk about.<sup>1</sup>*

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

Aaron, Joy, Carissa, Scarlett, Gideon, Phoebe, family and friends of Caleb Kiracofe, God has gathered us here today to recall God's gift of the Faith that He gave to His beloved son, Caleb through Holy Baptism. To that end, the readings today were chosen by his closest family members that you might hear in them from them the eternal Truth.

Before we delve into today's readings, God's Good Word carefully selected for you to hear of His grace in this our time of earthly loss, you should know that this family continues to take great consolation from the reality that Caleb recently received God's promises contained in these words of the divinely inspired Apostle Peter:

*baptism now saves all of you – not the putting off of dirt of the flesh, but of (a) good conscience, (a) pledge toward God) – through (the) resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>*

From that literal truth, we pray that you may receive comfort in knowing that Caleb is with our Lord. We who remain in Christ until our last days will see him again with our own eyes. Just as Christ is risen from the dead, so too shall we be raised.

We can be bold to declare that to be true Christian eulogy, it is a genuine good word. That is because, on September 3 this year, our little brother who had been born in the first Adam, as all humans are, became a little blood-bought brother of all Christians, for all time, in Christ, the second Adam. That eternal adoption God effected as Caleb Jackson received the Lord's washing of regeneration and renewal.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 6:3-4.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 3:21b.

You should understand that means that Caleb was thrice loved, for he was twice adopted. The first adoption occurred when he was received into his loving, attentive, and caring mortal family. That is when he dwelt in the Kiracofe household. His second, eternal adoption came once, forever, as he was received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism into his immortal family in heaven and on earth. That is when he began to dwell in the household of the Faith in the One True Church.

There, at that font, along with his siblings and the congregation God had assembled here that day, Caleb confessed a pledge of a good conscience toward God. That the little fellow did as he renounced the devil and all his works and ways. Caleb declared that he truly believed in the triune God. He stated with us that he desired to be a baptized and forgiven person. He knew what that meant for his parents had taught him well.

Then, through the longer rite of Baptism used that day, upon his forehead he was marked with the sign of the cross in oil, as we prayed that he would be anointed with the salutary oil of eternal life. That sign marked him before God, and the congregation – all in the face of the evil one and his minions – as one who has been bought back from the wrath of God, sin, death, and hell by the good work of Christ the crucified One. Remember, that the Holy Spirit moved St. Paul to write:

*Do you all not continue to know that as many of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, into the death of Him we have been baptized?*<sup>3</sup>

As a symbol of those eternal realities, Caleb's body now reclines facing the Lord's Table. Its vessel touches the font from which God's grace was poured over him not many days ago. His casket is vested with a white pall that is reserved for use in covering the mortal remains of those whom God has named, through baptismal regeneration, His holy ones, His saints. That may serve to teach you that he who was not long ago a complete sinner, then a sinner-saint, is now fully sainted.

Know that Saint Caleb Jackson Kiracofe rests in our Lord. We declare that to be true because he had, just two months ago, already died in Christ. In Jesus, even now, he awaits a perfectly restored body. That God has promised to give to each of the faithful in the coming resurrection of the blessed dead. All of this is placed here before the font to give us visual

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 6:3.

reminders of the truth proclaimed by this Word of God:

*Therefore, we have been buried together with Him through the Baptism into the death that, just as He was raised from (the) dead through the glory of the Father, thus also we, in new life, might continue to walk about.*<sup>4</sup>

Caleb died with Christ: and by God's grace for him, he did not long walk about in new life before he received its end. The foretaste of the eternal new life began for him just two months ago. For a little over a month – thanks be to God that Aaron and Joy *allow[ed] the children to come to [Jesus], and did not hinder them... any longer! Jesus truly embraced them, blessing them* with His touch through water combined with His Holy Word.<sup>5</sup>

There is so much joy in hearing and recalling that eternal reality. At times it has, and will, move us to freely shed tears of joy. That we do in thanksgiving for God's gift of the Faith to these children – and for us who have also been washed by Him. As we do so, we are free to remember the Lord's promise in these words, fulfilled in time by Jesus the Christ:

*He will swallow up the death forever, and YHWH will wipe away tears from all faces; and the reproach of His people He will cause to take away from upon all the earth; for YHWH has so worded.*<sup>6</sup>

That true Word brings with it the proclamation that you and I are free to mourn our earthly loss with sure and certain hope. Even so, we are not at the end point of that promise, for we still live in this fallen world. Another fully sainted member of this congregation long ago said, while standing over his wife's body with his sons in a hospital room, "We cry not for them, but for ourselves. We have had a loss. They have received the victory." Caleb died with Christ: he will be raised to life eternal!

To keep us mindful of that today, through our tears, we continue to hear and believe that in His death, Jesus swallowed up death. He *is the firstborn of the dead.*<sup>7</sup> Death holds no eternal victory for the faithful, for death has no dominion over Jesus. He has conquered it! Just as death could not hold Him – for He truly rose from the dead on the third day – just so death cannot hold our little brother in Christ.

It is that simple. We shall now illustrate how that is received and believed. Jesus says:

*Whosoever does not welcome the kingdom of the God as (a) child, definitely not*

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 6:3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Mark 10: 14b, 16b.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 25:8.

<sup>7</sup> Revelation 1:5a.

*may he come into it.*<sup>8</sup>

Children, I have a question for you: Do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead; that God also will raise Caleb from the dead so that you will see him again, forever alive and pure?

Adults: any questions about how to receive God's kingdom?

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Funeral Sermon: Caleb Jackson Kiracofe

Trinity XX, Saturday

Psalm 103; Isaiah 25:6-8; Romans 6:3-9; Mark 10:13-16

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*Soli Deo Gloria*

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<sup>8</sup> Mark 10:15.