



Jan 7: Soul Reset | Luke 3:21-23

Are you familiar with the television show called MASH?

I grew up watching MASH with my family. Did you watch it too? It was one show we all enjoyed. Well written, funny, but drama too.

Quite the cast of characters. Father Mulcahy, Frank Burns, Hot lips, Hawkeye, BJ Honeycut, Klinger.

Kernel Potter once said, **“I have a soft spot in my heart for Klinger. He looks a lot like my son and dresses a lot like my wife.”**

One of my favorite characters to despise, aside from Frank Burns...was Winchester.

Charles Emmerson Winchester the III to be precise. He was an insufferable snob. One of his stock phrases was something like, **“We don’t do that, we are Winchesters.”**

With his nose up in the air. This sense of what he would do or NEVER do because of who he was and where he came from.

But maybe that isn’t much different than some of us. Only that the families we grew up in guided what we did or didn’t do in good normal ways, not in snobbish ways.

For instance, my dad’s family had a good sense of humor. One way it came out was in nicknames for everyone...my dad was Squeek, when his voice changed in puberty, it squeaked and the name stuck even into adulthood.

My brother Mark was Marcus Welby MD...cuz there was a show on tv the year I was born called that and it stuck.

And in MASH we have Hawkeye, right? Hawkeye is a nickname. Captain Benjamin Franklin Pierce was his given name. It continued to fit him as an adult.

I was Famous Amos for a while, I think my dad started that. Until I found out my cousins had named a cow Famous Amos. And I was named chronologically after the cow was named. So, hey, was I named after the cow in temperament? Put an end to that!

Stroms liked to laugh and tell stories. That’s what it meant in our family to be a Strom.

Our families, our parents, shape and form our understanding of who we are. It gives us guidance sometimes. We do this or NOT do this because we are Stroms.

or (Dent...We do this or NOT do that because we are Mickelsons, Champlins, Andersons, and the like.)

or (Vergas...We do this or NOT do that because we are Schoenbergers, Courneyas, Strawhorns, Nelsons, and the like.)

Remembering who we are or where you came from, grounds us and gives us a sense of rootedness. That's what it means to have a sense of identity, and that sense of who you are directs and guides our behaviors, attitudes, actions and values our whole lives.

But sometimes we don't feel like our nicknames fit anymore...like a hat that doesn't fit. Maybe we grew out of how people saw us.

Or we don't feel like ourselves cuz we are still recovering from holiday stress and busyness or even some heightened sense of loneliness due to the holidays.

We got out whack with ourselves, our best selves. Or other people's perceptions of us don't fit anymore. Any or all of that can pull us out of living in our own skin, who we are or what we are doing just doesn't fit anymore.

And when that happens, and it happens, we can RESET ourselves.

And as Christians when we do a hard RESET, we are resetting ourselves back to the very bedrock truths of our faith, our core identity, of who we are in God's eyes.

As we RESET for a new year, it's essential then to remember our baptisms and what God says about us through that.

I'm guessing most of us are baptized, probably as infants. I was baptized when I was 18. Maybe some of us were baptized as part of a Confirmation process.

Our baptisms show and demonstrate WHO and WHOSE we are. In baptism, we become a child of God. We have been chosen and adopted by God. Baptism as includes the forgiveness and washing away of sins.

We are baptized into God's Forever Family the church, adopted permanently and fully as sons and daughters. We have a new identity that claims us from the inside out.

In baptism, God always sees us through the eyes of a loving Father, with unending grace and unconditional love.

So, when we do a "soul reset" we are simply reminding ourselves of God's adoption of us, being grafted into God's new Family, of God's love and inclusion of us.

And this brings us to this part of Jesus' life and this part of Jesus' story...his baptism.

We learn all the people were being baptized, so Jesus decided to be baptized too. And as Jesus was praying...a voice from heaven...an audible voice that was heard by many, God said to Jesus, "**You are my Son, whom I love.**"

We were just talking about this in bible study on Wednesday. Robbie/a guy in Dent asked this great question, "How do we hear God?" At one point I had said, "It's never audible, that's schizophrenia!"

Well, Amy, it was audible here. Teaching us one way we know we are hearing God's voice? Is when we hear God saying we are loved, adopted, and cherished and equipped for great purpose.

It's interesting also to note verse 23 from our morning's text that says, "**He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph.**" This last Advent, we were reminded, the story of Jesus' birth is full of some amazing things. Like the Holy Spirit helping Mary conceive.

And I bet that part of Jesus' birth story was too hard from some to believe. That some people just ended up saying..."**Of course, Joseph is the father. That's how having babies works!**"

Until now.

Until here.

When God the Father set the record straight.

Right out loud, publicly, for many to hear and witness. "**This is my son, whom I love.**" Interesting.

Any yet Jesus was Joseph's son. Jesus grew up in Joseph and Mary's home. When Jesus was only 8 days old, his parents brought Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised. Joseph gave Jesus his name.

Luke chapter 2 says Jesus' father and mother marveled at what was said about Jesus by Simeon and Anna in the Temple. And after Joseph and Mary did all that was required of them by the law in regards to their son, they all returned home to Nazareth where the child grew strong, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was on him.

And yet in his baptism, God the Father was also claiming Jesus as his son. And so, both Joseph and God the Father were/are fathers of Jesus. Both are true of Jesus.

Both are true of us too. We had/have families and fathers and mothers. And God is also our Father, our Heavenly Father and we are part of God's Forever Family.

And this is good news! Because we know not everyone grew up knowing their fathers or even sometimes our mothers or liking our families.

Not all of us grew up in stable homes with loving attentive parents. Some kids are abandoned as babies, adopted into new families or never adopted.

But the good news, their first Father was and is God. God was and is there for them...creating them, putting us in the Family, and loving all of us dearly as his children.

This belonging that comes through baptism though permanent is not a possessive or smothering kind of belonging. But rather another expression of God's love given freely and based on grace.

Grace means we didn't do anything to earn God's love or earn our place into God's Family. Gift, pure gift.

Do you ever wonder why God the Son came in the flesh, part of a family AND was baptized? Jesus was baptized to fully identify with us. And to help us identify with him.

He was human, like us. He had a family, like us. He was baptized, like us. He had a human father and his real Father. He died like we will.

And we can or will experience all of those same things. I think that is amazing. Jesus wanted to identify with us so completely...to prove God's love for us.

Does your perception of yourself fit the reality of how God sees you? Do you see yourself the way God sees you?

I remember the first time someone suggested that what God the Father said to Jesus was also EXACTLY what God the Father was saying over my life.

It was my first supervisor in church work. Scott talked about Jesus' baptism and then put my name in the verse, **"You are my daughter, Amy, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."**

Well, that was weird. It just couldn't touch my heart. I didn't see myself as dearly loved.

It took years and years for that to feel even just a little bit real to me. But God has helped me, I have grown in it warming my heart, giving me encouragement.

If God's love feels weak or far away. Do you need a "reset"?

Just this week, during my zoom call with two other women pastors, we bemoaned how easy it is to lose sight of our baptisms and its meaning.

We so easily lose sight of being BELOVED children. Because, ironically, we can get caught up and so busy telling others THEY are beloved of God. We lose sight of God's love for us.

So, we prayed for God to help us RESET ourselves by remembering our baptisms, resetting our souls on God's love for us.

And maybe that's a little step we could take together. End in praying for God to help us reset ourselves back on God, back on our primary identity as beloved children of God.

Let's draw near to Our Father...

Dear God,

Thank you for our baptisms. Thank you for what baptism means...forgiven by grace and faith in Christ, adopted into Your Forever Family, so dearly loved, called sons and daughters by You.

Help us RESET our hearts on You and see ourselves like You see us. Help us see our belovedness in your eyes.

And then, please help us RESET how we see and treat one another. That we would see each other as dearly loved siblings worthy of deep respect and care; worthy to be included, worthy of fellowshiping with.

May your Spirit bring us back again and again to these truths. May our expression of God's Forever Family glow and shine and cast a bright light...with love for one another.

And then the world will know we are yours by our love for one another. Amen!