A Sermon preached in Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan
by The Reverend Andrew Van Culin, *Rector*

All Souls' Sunday
1 November, 2026

In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Some 50 years ago or so at Christ Church, and in fact throughout the Episcopal church writ large, an object lesson was experienced as we moved fonts like ours out of baptistries into nays. It was an object lesson that reminded us that the truth of our baptism, the truth at the heart of this particular day is not to be locked away, tucked away into some odd, dark corner of a church any more than it's meant to be locked or tucked away in a church at all.

It is meant in fact for the world about us. And so, as we talk about baptism, as we talk about our membership into this community of faith, we are talking about how we participate in taking this truth into our lives and into the world about us. And if we are to have any hope of taking the truth that is here out there, we better have a little idea of what this truth is. Fair? So, I have one simple sentence. If I were to kind of condense the truth of baptism, I would condense it to this simple statement.

God's kingdom is not will be, not was, not a random or hope or pipe dream, but simply God's kingdom is here and now. In fact, it has been and will be for all time. The only question that remains is, do you see it? Do you know it? Do you live it? But the truth of its reality is unchanged and unchanging for God's kingdom is. And what is that kingdom? What are the hallmarks of the kingdom of God that is all around us, that is proclaimed through the baptisms that we experience and the lives that we live as a result of this font and this life?

Notice that we proclaim that you have been bathed in God's love, not will be. For some of us, let me just say, for some of us, there was an epic of time in Christian tradition when we thought, mistakenly, I dare say, that baptism was about what might come or what might be, that we baptize our child in order that they might be raised with Christ on the final and last day. Insurance of sorts. But notice that that statement and that theological premise questions the reality of God's kingdom here and now. It questions the veracity of Christ's proclamation of life and forgiveness.

It questions the reality of Easter. We wonder if it will be rather than live confident that it already is. But in baptism, we proclaim to a child that you are bathed in the love of God already full stop. You

are beloved of God. Each of you in your baptism were received and proclaimed as a beloved child of God and not just a truth for you, but a truth for every child born into this world. They too are a beloved child of God, perhaps just unaware of it. For no one has had the audacity to say you are beloved, not just by me, your father, not just by me, your mother, but by the very creator of the stars of the sky.

That love is yours, is here and now. In baptism, we proclaim as well that you have been freed. All that burdens you, all sin that destroys you and your neighbor, all that weighs you down in guilt and fear and shame that God has said, "I release you of that. I do not hold that dark truth over you. I do not wait for a day to point out all your faults and all of your weaknesses. I simply cast them into the utter darkness in order that your beauty and your goodness may shine always." That is not a proclamation about what God will do, but it is a proclamation about what God is doing even now in you and for you.

Finally, in baptism, we proclaim that you have been born into a new family, into a new kingdom, that you are not limited by the flesh and blood of your household, that the love you know is not limited to the mother and father, the grandmother and grandfather, the sister or brother that you know and I pray, adore, and love. And I pray, adore and love you. But that you are part of a broader kingdom connected in fact to every person upon this earth, both now and in the past and in the years to come, that you are part of an eternal kingdom of humanity that is one family and one household.

Not a kingdom that will be, not a family that is yet to come, but a kingdom and a family that is even now. These are truths that we try and aspire to practice here. We exchange the peace to remind ourselves of the bond of love and affection that binds us to one another even beyond our pews, or I dare say across the aisle. We practice little expressions of grace and affection and love in order that the truth that was proclaimed in our infancy may be practiced and experienced in our adulthood with the audacious hope that we will take these truths into our lives and into the world. For the truth of baptism is not a hope of what will be, but a proclamation of what is, for God's kingdom is.