

INSTANT FAMILY: JUST ADD WATER
(a sermon for all Children of God)

Rev. Mary Barrett Speers
Genesis 6-8 (condensed from NIVR) and Matthew 12:46-50

How many of you have ever been to sleep-away camp? How many of you have ever been away to school? How many of you have had to stay overnight in a strange place with people you didn't know very well? In a storm, or maybe an elevator when the power went out? Or an airport? Or on a mission trip?

You become closer to people that way, didn't you?

I think Noah and his family and all the animals in the ark must have gotten closer, too. Think of what they'd all been through together. I think they became family—just because they were all together and completely surrounded by water. So in that sense they were...instant family, just add water!

Well, there's another way we become family just by adding water, and it's called the Sacrament of Baptism. We're going to baptize Hudson Gray, who is Rob and Janet Craig's grandson, and Erica and Dan's son, in just a few minutes. We baptize people, even babies, because Jesus was baptized, too—and he was baptized by his cousin John, so it was all family then, too.

One day long ago, Jesus was sitting in a house, teaching all of his friends about God and how to be God's family. Somebody came to the door and said, "Jesus, your family is looking for you."

Jesus looked at all the people around him, people who had been with him, slept out at night with him, stayed with him when there was nothing to eat and even when soldiers were looking for them. They'd been through a lot together.

These friends loved Jesus, and they loved God, and they wanted to learn more about loving each other and God. "This is my real family," Jesus thought. And so he said, "*Here* are my mothers, and my sisters, and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God our Father is my mother, and my brother, and my sister."

Now, today you are sitting in a house, like Jesus was, among lots of people who want to do God's will, just like those people Jesus was with. Jesus saw them as his family. I want you to look at *us* the way Jesus looked at the people around him.

See, Jesus looked at all the people in *that* room and said, "This is my family!" We are all children of God!" As you look at the people in *this* room you can say, "That is my family! We are all children of God!"

So now let's look at the different people in this room too. First, I want all the grandmothers and grandfathers, and all the great-aunts and great-uncles, to stand up....

Now...there are even great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers here. That's your grandparents' *parents*! Would all you great-grandparents stand up, too—or, well, when you get to be a *great*-grandparent, sometimes you can't stand up so easily, so maybe you want to wave instead.

So if you're part of Jesus' family, all these people are your family, too! Did you know you had that many grandparents? (and great-grandparents?)

They all love you! The next time you see one of these people, give them a great big hug to show how glad you are to be a part of the same family. You need each other!

Now I am going to ask all the grandparents (and great-grandparents) to sit down, and I am going to ask all the mothers and fathers and aunts and uncles and all their friends to stand up. What a lot of parents you have! Every one standing out there is a church-father or a church-mother, that is to say, a god-father or a god-mother, or a god-uncle or a god-aunt, to you! You don't have to be afraid, ever, that you won't have someone to go to when you are in trouble or you need help. Your church parents care about you and are proud of you. You can help them, too!

Now we'll let the parents sit down and ask everyone who has been baptized to raise their hands. See, all those people have been baptized, just like Jesus was! And you have, too! We older ones remember when you were baptized, even if you don't.

All of us are brothers and sisters because we have all been baptized just like our brother Jesus! We are all children of God just the same way.

Think of all the people and animals in the ark with Noah. Do you think sometimes they needed time out from each other? Of course they did. So then they had other brothers and sisters, or aunts and uncles, or grandparents, or *great*-grandparents they could go and play with instead, for awhile.

Our families understand us almost better than anyone. You can share your work and play and your love with all of the people here, because everyone here is your brother and your sister, even the oldest ones! And everyone here is your grandparents and your parents and your brothers and your sisters and, you'll find out one day, even your children, all at the same time.

So you could say that Baptism is... "Instant Family: Just Add Water."

And now we are going to say something all our church brothers and sisters have said since the very beginning of Jesus's family, two thousand years ago. Did you know that in the very beginning of the church, this prayer was a secret, and people only learned it *after* they had been baptized? We are going to say together the family prayer Jesus taught us, saying..."

Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. AMEN.