

***Repent and be Baptized! Happy Mothers' Day!
The Rev. Kathleen Hawkins Berkowe***

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

At the 10:15am Service today Suffragan Bishop Laura Ahrens will confirm fifteen young people. They will take on, for themselves, the promises that their parents and Godparents made for them at Baptism. And the rest of us, the congregation who witness this, will promise to support them, and we will renew our Baptismal vows.

Baptism is our Christian membership. We are born into new life in Christ. In Baptism, we join the body of Christ, the community of the Holy Spirit. For Mothers day, when we honor those who have nurtured us, brought us to life, and sustained us, this is a beautiful idea.

But, here is a question. If we, the baptized are "in," does that mean that others, non-believers, non-Christians, those who have not decided to be confirmed into our Episcopal Church, are "out?" Are they outside of God's saving grace?

Of course not.

The 14th century English mystic, Julian of Norwich tells us that like a true mother, Christ never rejects us. He is always loving us and redeeming us. Christ Himself has taught us from the beginning this: recognizing and accepting him is new birth. And New Birth in Christ then continues as a lifelong journey. And Scripture tells us that salvation is outside of whatever limits we put on it, because God's plans for salvation through Jesus Christ are "greater than we can ask or imagine."

Let's look at today's Gospel and reading from Luke and the Book of Acts. Luke/Acts was originally addressed to the early Christian community that was still a part of Judaism. But the Scriptures carry the message that salvation is for people who would have been excluded from the devout Jewish community.

Salvation extends to Gentiles, who were not born into the faith.

*St. John's Episcopal Church
Mini-Sermon - 3 Easter
May 8, 2011 5pm and 8am*

Salvation extends not only to those who have remained in Israel but also to "all people everywhere."

Salvation is not only for those who have seen Jesus with their own eyes and heard him speak, but also for those who hear about him. And salvation is for us, those who hear about him through the power of the Holy Spirit in Scripture.

Luke/Acts tells us that God's salvation is way beyond what anyone then – or now could have in mind.

Jesus' message - and salvation through Him - is not about excluding others. It is about embracing and accepting the new life that God gives us.

We recognize that new life and celebrate it whenever we come together to take part in the Eucharist. And we take the chance to rededicate ourselves, whenever there is a baptism or confirmation, to the new life that is ours in Christ.

Amen