



**Wise Words
of Wisdom
for
Zaavan
On the day of
His Baptism**

(A LETTER TO ZAAVAN FROM HIS GRANDPA CRAIG, ON YOUR BAPTISM. A LETTER I ALSO SPOKE TO ZAAVAN'S MOTHER, KAYLA, ON HER BAPTISM 27 YEARS AGO.)

Dear Zavaan,

Today, God has made a decision about you. He hasn't waited to find out how sincere you are, how devout or religious you might be, or how well you understand the Bible. He hasn't even waited to find out if you are interested or willing to take his decision seriously. He has simply decided.

And what He's decided is that you, Zavaan, belong to him. In this baptism He has said, "You are baptized in my name. I am your God." In another language Zavaan, the word baptism means, "to immerse." To have him surround you, encompass you, and envelope you. He has made you a part of himself, a part of the body of Christ. Whatever happens to Christ, then Zavaan, will happen to you. We probably should have immersed you in water today Zavaan. It would have been a better symbol of what's happening to you. We don't know why we don't do it in the Lutheran tradition. We think we miss a lot by not doing it.

It really doesn't matter how it's done, we suppose. God can claim you just as easily with a handful of water as he can with a tub full. And that is after all the most important thing to remember about baptism. God has made a decision for you Zavaan. He has decided to be your God and he takes you just the way you are - with your strengths, gifts, talents, and abilities - and also your bad habits, selfishness, and pride.

When God says, "Your mine" in baptism, he's not saying "I will be your God when you are good enough, devout or religious enough; or when you show me you really mean business." God would no more say that than a doctor would say, "I'll be your doctor when you are well, but don't bother me when you are sick."

God has made a decision for you Zavaan, and he will forgive you, taking you just as you are. There may be suffering, death, and sorrow in the meantime. You may strike it rich or spend your life driving a tractor, teaching school, or looking at people's tonsils. But once he's said to you, "You're mine," you have a future without end. He is the Lord of life and the future. He is your God. You have his word on it.

Now this word has some important implications for your life. First and foremost it means that you belong to God. And all who are a part of God are a part of you. No matter where you go in the world, no matter where you are, you can walk into any church and say, "Hi brother and sisters, I belong here."

That may not seem that important now but it might in the days ahead. You see, when you get older there will be people telling you that you won't belong until you do certain things. In school your classmates may tell you you don't belong until you drink or try drugs or who knows what. And it can be scary to feel excluded. When you get older your company may tell you to act a certain way or you won't be a good employee. Someday your country might demand your allegiance to a certain way of thinking and call you unpatriotic if you don't follow. Society will tell you to spend and consume a certain way to fit in. All these things will try to convince you that you don't belong unless you act a

certain way.

But you do belong Zavaan. You belong to something more important and more long lasting than school, company, or country. You belong to the Body of Christ. You've been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. And you didn't even have to do anything for that Zavaan - because God has made a decision for you today.

Sadly Zavaan, there may even be some of your brothers and sisters in Christ who may try to invalidate this day. They will try to tell you that because you didn't know or understand what was going on, "This day isn't enough. You need to be in control." Don't believe them Zavaan. When God claims you, you are claimed whether you like it or not. God is, after all, greater than you.

Zavaan, we want you to grow up knowing you are loved. We want you to feel secure and confident that you are loved. When you go outside and play, we want you to run in the wind, and laugh at the gentle breezes. We want you to skip in the sun and rejoice in the rain. We don't want you to ever worry whether you are loved and cared for. We don't want you to grow up wondering if we are watching your every move to make sure you're being good. If you have to worry about that, then you will never enjoy those other things.

We have to believe God feels the same way Zavaan. He wants you to enjoy this world he has created, and not to worry about anything else. He wants you to celebrate his marvelous creation and this thing called life with others. That's why he's made a decision for you Zavaan, right now, today, so that you will never ever have to worry about whether he loves you or not, whether he cares for you or not.

God has made a decision about you today Zavaan. He's said, "You're mine! Today! Tomorrow! And always." So go Zavaan. Celebrate with others the goodness of this life God has given you. It's the best way to say "Thank you" to your heavenly Father.

We love you,

Mom and Dad and Grandpa and Grandma

Zaavan was baptized in the Ravenscroft Chapel at Spirit in the Desert in August 2018.