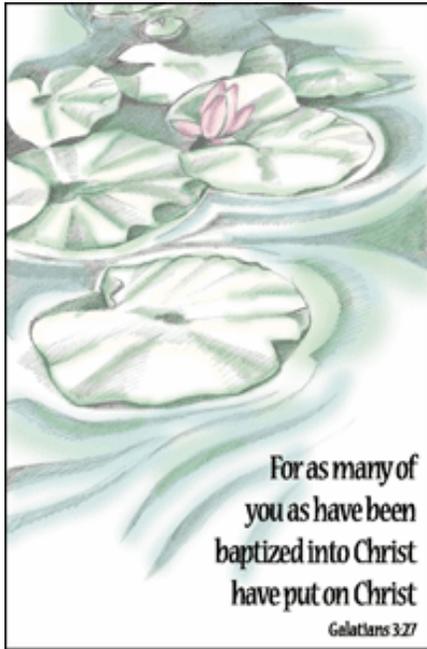


Baptism

Jacketed in Jesus



I asked the man from Montana if it was true. He said it was.

I had read about a practice called jacketing. Jacketing takes us to the wide-open ranges of Big Sky country. Think of thousands of sheep grazing on thousands of acres of ranchland. Occasionally, during lambing season, a ewe dies while giving birth. Only one course of action can save her lamb. Because the rancher is too far from his ranch house, and because he is responsible for thousands of sheep, he can't bottle feed that one lamb. And if he tried to lead the lamb to another ewe, the ewe would sniff it and reject it, knowing it wasn't her own. The lamb can be saved only if another lamb has died. The rancher will skin the dead lamb and stitch its hide around the orphan. It is called jacketing. Then, when the lamb is brought to the ewe, she sniffs the jacketed orphan and smells her own. The jacketed lamb has a family and a future.

Our condition at birth was worse than that of an orphan. We were born dead in the stench of sin and selfishness. In God's nostrils, we were the smell of the rotting corpse of the old Adam. The repulsive smell lingers in the ugly reality of our laziness, the cutting words of our hidden gossip, and the sordid details of our secret lust. God's command "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48) is beyond our reach. The unmistakable stench proves that we don't belong to the Father.

Thankfully, God does not reject us. Paul writes, "All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27). We are now jacketed with Jesus. Imagine! We are wrapped in the perfect obedience of the one and only perfect Child of God. Now when we are brought under the microscope of God's scrutiny, our heavenly Father sees only the perfect life of Jesus, without stain or smudge. Now God smells the pleasing aroma of the perfect words and works of his own Son, Jesus, offered as our substitute. Baptism wraps us in the clothes of Christ's obedience. That is why Scripture declares, "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). In Baptism, God washed us clean and dressed us in the robes of Jesus' righteousness. Now we can stand before God. We are jacketed in Jesus. We have a future. We are loved. We have life.