

So for those of you who don't know Hudson, he has this public reputation of starting off shy, playing hard-to-get at first, and then, within the blink of an eye, he becomes the contagious life of the party, reeling you in well after he leaves your sight. How eerily similar it is for many in the Christian life, being shy in the early years surrounded by the older generations in the church, who make you go through the excruciating rituals of acolyting and Confirmation classes.

But soon enough we put it together in our minds that God can, actually, work through us, be there right beside us, down paths we take that we, actually, enjoy. No offense to the essential acolytes and the ground-breaking edge-of-your-seat Confirmation classes; but we get this sense of new life, when we feel we can take on the world with our own personal repertoire of gifts and talents that God must have played some role in shaping from the beginning, all the way from that baptism we can somehow never manage to remember. Of course, for the rest of us who will be able to remember this day much more than Hudson ever will, baptism has this contagiousness about it. It gives us this contagious hope, this enthralling sense of new life, as if there is still a preciousness to this world that we, simply, never hear about anymore.

Yes, Hudson in his shyness and playing-hard-to-get-ness will be encroached upon by God through plain 'ole water. It will reel Hudson into a family of sisters and brothers in Christ, into the contagious love and grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ Himself. But let's be honest with ourselves, regarding the rest of us, who play a role in this baptism today too: we *still* have our fair share of shyness and playing-hard-to-get-ness, when it comes to this whole Christian thing.

Many of our sisters and brothers in Christ are still in recovery mode from those days of being forced to put on the white robe and light all the candles at the front of the church before a mind-numbing worship service commenced, only a few days before an even more un-enthralling time of memorizing creeds and prayers and Scripture passages. Some still aren't so sure about the relevance of the whole church thing in daily-life. Some, quite frankly, cannot trust an institution that houses a bunch of hypocrites who say they believe in the love, grace, and mercy repertoire of God, but practice anything but, from Sunday afternoon through the rest of the week. So yes, to put it mildly, there is still a fair amount of shyness and playing-hard-to-get-ness in the post-baptism Christians among us.

Except, with this divine repertoire of love, grace, and mercy, there are, evidently, zero exceptions. The promise that God makes to Hudson today becomes all the more real: that no matter what happens in Hudson's life: no matter what path he chooses to take, even if that were to mean zero worship attendance and all-around shyness with the whole faith thing, God is still going to love him to his core. God is still going to bring grace into Hudson's life time-and-time again and absolutely refuse to stop. God is still going to surround him with a mercy that will carry him all the way beyond this life.

That Great News, that we call the Gospel, is contagious, to say the least; to the point that God refuses to let go of any of us at any point in our life, no matter what. The church is starting to realize that all the more in recent years. We know that we must embody God's repertoire in the world: to bring to life even more the love, grace, and mercy that Jesus Christ brought to life, and reeled people into a movement that continues to this day. It means being the church beyond an hour on Sunday and however many hours for education: important foundation-shaping times, to be sure. But these baptismal waters that Hudson will be placed into this day: those waters do not, all of a sudden, become still after a few hours. They're always flowing. They're always

moving, crashing onto the shores of lives that need assured of love, grace, and mercy, including up to shores we've never seen, some we'd rather never see.

Of course, that's going to create additional shyness amongst us post-baptism Christians. Some don't mind just the hour on Sunday obligation. Some don't mind just sharing that love with family and friends. Some are perfectly okay keeping our faith to ourselves. But these baptismal waters don't seem to operate that way. Instead, they churn just as rapidly as the Holy Spirit itself, so much so that not even death stood a chance against this Savior of ours, who loved us, including Hudson, far, far too much to give up.

This Savior who wanted to make sure Hudson, and all of us, know what grace truly means at an empty tomb in the backdrop of a cross on a hill. This Savior who yearns to show mercy more than all the judgment, guilt, and shame that this world has to unleash upon us. This is the contagious life that not only has Hudson being reeled into this day, but for all of us that have already been, no matter how often we forget: reeled in by the God who wouldn't have it any other way throughout this life and forevermore. Nothing we do can ever take that away from us. And for that, and for Hudson, we give thanks to God indeed! Amen.