

Psalm 23 isn't just a big deal for Bible study groups or for someone struggling in their faith journey still-up in the middle of the night, even families planning their loved one's funeral; it's, also, a rather big deal in the music-realm of the world. Many composers have tried with all their musical might to try to, somehow, add even more sacred depth to the words with just the right combination of chords and dynamic levels and long, drawn-out fermatas.

The most powerful one for me was a rendition we sang in the college choir that moved from staccato, short and detached notes to measures of all the smooth and connected voices combining to add that sacred depth, as if the music could, spiritually, transport you to the shores of those still waters. And, then, the singers convincing you that such a feeling is not meant to last for just that moment, even a day, but "forever," as the Psalm so puts it. Yet, I realize, as is often the case with music, there are no words to explain it...you just have to be there to experience it first-hand: a choir concert, an orchestra, a musical. No matter how much we try to explain it to family and friends afterwards, it's just...not quite the same.

Today, we witness one of the first such unexplainable moments in what will be the life-long composition of Sterling Schatt. But, also, today we recognize Sterling isn't going to pull it off alone. He will need his parents, Matthew and Meghan, his brother, Colin, his godparent, Nathan, grandparents and many other family along the way, to help nurture and empower the music of Sterling's heart to life. Today, simply serves as the unquestionable reminder, that God believes in Sterling, too; that God has already more than joined him for this journey of a lifetime, a journey that even reaches far into eternity.

And yet, we know that the final product that shows up on any stage does not happen without some practice, some intense rehearsing, some time away from family and friends. Not to mention, for composers, directors and more, they can be kept up all hours of the night stressing over the finest of details. Sterling will need his fair share of practice when it comes to sharing or realizing that another person different from himself deserves the same respect as he does. After all, today, God is calling Sterling to not use his talents to better his own circumstances for the long run, but to use his gifts in his ultimate calling in this life: disciple of Jesus

Christ. His Savior, who calls Sterling to follow Him along these baptismal water shores into terrains that may not be where he prefers to go, but they are, nonetheless, places where God cherishes just as much as anywhere else.

Of course, God recognizes that just because Sterling gets baptized this morning, it will by no means make him perfect: that there will never be any stress whatsoever for his parents going forward. There will be struggles for him, mistakes made and long sleepless nights along the way. Nevertheless, there will never, ever be a struggle for God in loving Sterling just as he is, child of God, no matter what.

No matter how much Sterling's composition of life doesn't turn out to absolutely perfect, it isn't so much about what Sterling pulls off in the years ahead, anyway. It's about what God has already composed on a Calvary hillside and out of a tomb, where many were convinced the ultimate *fine* was unleashed on a man from Nazareth. Instead, God unleashed a holy movement that transformed our way of thinking: to convince us that we no longer need to worry about our eternity, we no longer have to keep ourselves up at night wondering if we're doing enough

to appease God. God already more than took care of it all. God took care of Sterling at that time. God took care of all of us from that day forward.

Today, Sterling beings the journey through waters that are not always still, but will have their fair share of crashing waves. Through it all, God has made a promise to jump in with him, to never leave Sterling alone. God does so through you as his family and friends and complete strangers still to come. Wherever these waters may take him, regardless of how Sterling decides to shape his life-long composition, God makes the promise to never, ever leave him behind.

It is one of many, you-just-have-to-be-there moments for Sterling, that words, even music, can't quite adequately describe. And that's okay that we don't always have the words, but just knowing that throughout his life, Sterling's cup of faith, his relationship with God, will always be running over, with how much God is fully immersed into Sterling's life. No matter which step he takes, no matter what note he plays, God will never exit the stage away from Sterling, from any of us. And for that Greatest News of all, including for Sterling, we give thanks to God indeed!

Amen!