The names of those to be baptized this morning—Christian and Aurora—could hardly be more apt for this occasion. Christian—almost self-explanatory on this day that these two officially become Christians in their own right. Aurora—Greek for dawn—on this day of the dawning of their life in Christ.

Christian and Aurora’s godparents (who answer on her behalf) will respond affirmatively to questions such as these:

* Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept his as your Savior?
* Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?
* Will you follow and obey him as your Lord?

These two have heard and read a bit about Jesus in their young lives, and today we’re set them on a path to hear and read and learn a great deal more about him. His life on earth and his story are presented to us in the Bible. Even though it’s a pretty brief statement of an entire of 33-year life, at times it’s quite detailed and complicated, and the story can be challenging for thinking people I nthe 21st century.

If there’s any shorthand for the purpose of his life and death and resurrection, we find that in his own words, as we have received them. The most pertinent of those seem to me to be these:

* Love God with all of your self—mind, body, spirit.
* Love your neighbor as yourself—in your best moments of loving yourself.
* Feed my sheep, as we read in last week’s Gospel, meaning take care of folks who can’t take care of themselves. A kind of tacit corollary to this, I think, is encourage and equip those who can take care of themselves so they’re not needlessly dependent on others.

It is by doing these things—and holding these attitudes—that we Christians fulfill our baptismal promise to follow Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

Now there’s a lot more to what happens in baptism—more, and more wonderful, parts of the baptismal covenant. I believe that all the rest, though, merely expands on the fairly straightforward questions and answers we’ve just considered.

The readings for today also speak to this essential matter of personal relationship with God in Christ. It’s in this sheep and shepherd language, like these two examples:

* The Collect, in which we affirm that our Lord calls us each by name. That’s what we do in part in baptism. Another, rather archaic term for baptism is christening, which we’ve come to understand as naming someone (or something, like a boat).
* We read the 23rd psalm today because it is appointed in our lectionary. We read it yesterday as well, at LaVerne Broad’s funeral. How fitting it is at both the beginning of our Christian life at baptism and at the end of our earthly life.

Today I’m struck by the psalmist’s telling us that the Lord makes us lie down in green pastures. That’s particularly good news for people like me who find it difficult to slow down, take a nap, for example. The Lord leads us beside still waters. How literally refreshing to be led in such a way that we’re aware of the still waters, God’s constant love for us.

Occasionally running on a trail, beside a pond or stream, I discover I’ve been led to a peace and calm I find it hard, sometimes impossible, to conjure on my own.

“The king of love my shepherd is” we sang a few moments ago in that beautiful paraphrase of Psalm 23. Though kings and shepherds may not be part of daily life for most of us (I know there are some exceptions right here in church today) we have all known what it is to feel love for someone else and to be loved, by our mothers, for example, on this Mother’s Day.

That love finds its unimaginable epitome in this family to which we welcome Christian and Aurora today—a family in which God loves every single one of us and all of us together and calls us to love one another

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