

Mothers read stories to their children. We say our prayers and then get ready for a journey to another world through the imagination of authors like the late Maurice Sendak. So as we celebrate Mother’s Day, and appreciate the work of teachers and those in education who continue the work we commit ourselves to when we baptize – the raising of children in the faith, we’re going to journey “Where the Wild Things Are.” We’re baptized in victory, so to Jared and all the baptized we say, “Let the wild rumpus start!”

“Let the wild rumpus start” 1 John 5:4–5 (NRSV) for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

We live in a world filled with “wild things;” they’re big; they’re bad; they’re scary. Sometimes they surprise us; sometimes the only thing we can see is that “wild thing” on the horizon. As much as we’d like to confine those “wild things” to the pages of a children’s book, they get loose; they enter our lives and our orderly world is turned upside down.

Times of trial come; when they do, remember your baptism. Remember that “wild things” do not have the final word on you; the final word has already been spoken; the final word is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Faith in Him is the victory that overcomes the world.

In the words of an article I read this week: “Faith is victory over the world not because believers wield the world's power in a superior way, but because faith means confessing the Son of God and loving God's children, the very things that the evil one tries to prevent (4:1-4). Victory over "the world" does not require spiritual heroics or ascetic denial of creation. Instead, victory is found through faith in what Jesus is and has done; nothing else is needed.”

We proclaim that victory when we baptize. We speak God’s final word. Jared can’t speak for himself this morning, but Mom and Dad can and did. We spoke that word too; and when we spoke it, we made a commitment to Jared and all of God’s children. We will teach you. We will foster your growth and development. We will do all that we can to bring the gifts God has given you to fruition.

This conviction is why you will have a difficult time finding a Presbyterian parochial school. As education was developing in the United States in the 19th century, the Presbyterian Church chose to support public education; we educate all of God’s children, not just our own, because the victory of God through Jesus Christ sends us to the world for the world for the sake of the love of God.

When we baptize, we choose sides. We will be for the least and the lowest. We will stand with those it’s popular to be against. We will embrace the ones we’d rather exclude.

Public education is a key arena where this choice is being tested. It’s a battleground. Will we provide the opportunity for a quality education to all God’s children, or will we allow education to become another arena where there are “have’s” and “have not’s?” Will we reform one of our society’s cornerstones or renege on one of the key promises we make?

When Jared goes to school, where will he go, what will he learn, who will teach him, and what resources will they have to work with? Who will his classmates be? Will we retreat to bunkers where everyone looks and acts the same; will he be expected to pull himself up by his bootstraps while we refuse to provide the boots?

At the same time, we can also hear the voices of the baptized who question why education costs what it costs. When we provide boots, do they have to be these boots that cost this much? Are there other models we can implement; other approaches we can try that will keep our baptismal promise to all God’s children?

For the love of God and God’s children, we resist the siren song of simplicity and wade into the waters of complexity. We step out “where the wild things are,” where the questions are hard and the answers aren’t easy, where both sides have a point and the truth lies somewhere in between.

We can do this because of our baptism. We have a center that will hold. We have a foundation on which to stand. When the “wild things” roar and gnash their teeth and the rumpus is all around us, we remember that God is love; God loves “wild things” and is at work in this world taming beasts and making all things new – including us!

That’s the victory that we know is already won. The way may be hard. The journey may be long, but we will get there! So teachers, keep on teaching! Mother’s, keep reading those stories (and if we get out of line, send us like Max to bed without our supper). Baptized children of God one and all, stay connected, stay involved, stay the course when the “wild things” whisper that it would be so much easier if we just kept our eyes closed, our mouths shut, and didn’t get involved. For in a room just around the corner in a house not far from here, the following scene from “Where the Wild Things Are” is being re-enacted again and again and again:

"And Max, the king of all wild things, was lonely and wanted to be where someone loved him best of all."

Remember your baptism! Remember the word that was spoken – Jesus Christ, the Son of God! Make this world the place where Max and all God’s children are loved best of all. “Let the wild rumpus start!” We’re baptized in victory. Amen.