

Baptism of our Lord - 25 Jan 12 - Baptism for Daily Living-Pastor Terry Goerz

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Seated

The title of the sermon today is: "Baptism for Daily Living". The text for the sermon is the epistle reading from Romans 6. The applicable portions are included in the sermon.

No doubt you have been reminded what Baptism is in sermons and bible studies. It is water that is understood by the command of Christ to make disciples. It is water combined with God's Word. That Word is Christ's promise to be present in Baptism and to save us through Baptism. What gives Baptism its great power - the Word of God combined with the water. You recall the blessings of Baptism. It is a washing of rebirth and renewal, the delivery of the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. In short, "Baptism saves." We note the necessity of faith, how saving faith trusts the promise of Christ attached to Baptism. To believe in Jesus as your Savior is to believe in the Baptism that now saves you through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Today, using our text, we are going to consider as our catechism says, read:

"What does such baptizing with water mean for daily life? **Luther's Small Catechism**

The idea that Baptism is a daily thing may come initially as a surprise to some people even though they learned that baptism is also for daily living in their confirmation lessons. If we look at Baptism only as an outward symbol and ceremony, something we do to identify ourselves as Christians, or even something God does to identify us in the way of a sign or symbol, then we might logically conclude that Baptism is a one-time thing, something done once and then simply remembered with a certificate, much like graduations and anniversaries.

Yet many things done once have lasting effects. For example, marriage vows are exchanged once, but they have daily importance to those who are married. Marriage is living out the vows once made at your wedding. Ordination vows are spoken once, but they daily set the agenda for what a pastor is supposed to be doing. A contract is signed but once, but it is in effect for the life of that contract.

To be baptized is to have God speak to you and act on you. As a sacrament we say we are doing something natural, while God is doing something supernatural. It is a decisive act of God. God has focused His attention on you in Baptism, you have been caught in the cross hairs of His Word. Baptism is not just a one-time thing. It is a **daily** thing. Baptism is a daily garment, something we wear each and every

day. Then read:

1 Corinthians 1: 22 He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

In Baptism God has marked us with his seal of ownership, branded us as sheep of His pasture, covered the shame of our sin with Christ. In Baptism we wear Christ like a coat. The Christian **life** is a daily Baptism; and Baptism is the daily life of a Christian. It is a daily dying and rising. Just as we go to sleep each night and get up in the morning, we daily die to sin and arise to live in Christ through our Baptism. Daily dying and rising is the daily life of the baptized.

.... What exactly does this mean? And what exactly does this daily dying and rising look like? First the dying, then the rising.

Baptism is a daily dying in the death of Jesus. V3 of our text said, read:

Romans 6: 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

The apostle Paul writes this as though everyone would know this and agree wholeheartedly with it, right down to the smallest child. We were **buried** with Christ by baptism into **His death**. Baptism unites us with the **death of Jesus**.

Death is the necessary lot of a sinner. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sins must die. Sin and the sinner must be put to death. There is no way around it. We have an intuitive sense of that. That's why we hate death and fear it so (unless you are in denial of it). We know deep down the consequences of our rebellion. We know that we must die. The person whose life is in shambles and who feels the stinging shame of his or her sin may say, "I just want to die." And God says to that person, "I can arrange that. Repent and be baptized."

In the death of Jesus on the cross, God has given the world a death in which a sinner may die now and live forever. It is **either** die now in the death of Jesus and live forever in His life; **or** live now apart from the death of Jesus and die forever in your own death. There is no third option. Jesus died for sin and rose from the dead. V10 says, read:

Romans 6: 10 The death he died, he died to sin **once for all**; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

Baptism joins us to the death of Jesus. It nails us to His cross, buries us in His tomb. God has put our sin out of His sight. **He** has buried it in the death of His Son, hidden it in His wounds, sealed it up in His grave. Our sin is drowned in Baptism, and our sin is totally paid for!

Baptismal death in the death of Jesus is a death in hope. V5 says, read:

Romans 6: 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

We all know how **our** story ends. We know how the last chapter comes out for those who are joined to Christ. Christ has died. And we have died with Him. Christ has risen. And **we will** rise with Him. That means whatever may come our way in this life - whether poverty, disease, pain or persecutions – read:

Romans 8: 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Whatever burden the cross of Christ may bring to us now, it does not compare with what will be ours in the resurrection of the righteous.

Baptism means that by daily contrition the old Adam in us should be drowned and die together with all sin and evil desire. Baptism sets us in a struggle, read:

Galatians 5: 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Those who think that the baptized life is an easy life are kidding themselves. We have become the enemy of the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature. The devil roars and fumes against Baptism, and will stop at nothing to keep us away from it. The world hated Christ and crucified Him, and it will seek to crucify all who are joined with Christ. Our old, sinful nature despises this water combined with the Word. The old Adam is a good swimmer. He **daily** resurrects himself and resists Baptism and refuses to be drowned by it. St. Paul says his works are plain, read:

Galatians 5: 19 – 21 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

.... We don't have to wonder where all the evil in the world comes from. We know. It comes from deep within us, and needs to be drowned daily in the bath of Baptism.

Baptism means freedom. We have been freed from the tyranny of sin. V7 of our text says, read:

Romans 6: 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Because we died with Christ in our baptism, sin no longer has lordship over us. Christ has lordship. He lords His death and resurrection over us so that sin cannot harm us. Once we were slaves to sin; now, in baptism, we are slaves to

righteousness. That is true freedom. Once we offered our bodies to sin as instruments of evil; now we offer our baptized bodies to God as instruments of righteousness, living sacrifices holy and acceptable through Christ's sacrifice. Once we could do nothing but sin. Now we are free not to sin.

As we said, baptism initiates this on-going struggle. Though we are dead to sin, we still sin. We, who have been justified, reckoned righteous by the death of Jesus, must now continually count, or reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, as verse 11 of our text said, read:

Romans 6: 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

We do this by daily confessing our sins, acknowledging our sinfulness before God, seeking His mercy, imploring His grace. This is where I think we Lutherans have stumbled. We have forgotten this fourth part of Baptism. And as a result, we have neglected the so-called "3rd sacrament" of personal confession and absolution, which Luther points out is nothing else than a return to and a reapplication of Baptism.

One of the great sadness's of Lutheranism today, indeed of most of Christianity today, is that the baptized do not know how to use their Baptism rightly. We fret and fuss and wring our hands over our sins instead of going to our pastor, confessing them, burying them, and being forgiven of them. There are some who imagine that is "cheap grace." Cheap grace is baptism without repentance; absolution without personal confession, Christ without a cross. I think one reason we are so easily seduced by the latest methodism's for solving our problems is that we don't want the strong medicines that Christ prescribes for us. We would rather wring our hands and bend our knees; we would rather recite slogans like "just say no" instead of saying yes to our Baptism. We would rather work on our "problems" and "issues" instead of dealing with the fact that we are the problem, and we need to die in Jesus so that Jesus might live in us daily.

By confessing our sins, we bury them in daily Baptism, we drown them in the flood that flowed from Jesus' side. This is what St. Paul means when he said in our text, "Count yourselves dead to sin." Confess your sin. Disown it. Throw it away. Nail it to Jesus' cross. Bury it in Jesus' grave. In confession, we are setting Baptism to work for us, unleashing the power of Jesus' death and resurrection in our lives. **We cannot conquer sin.** Christ alone conquers sin **for us**. He does it through the daily application of Baptism. This is what the apostle Paul means when he says, shortly after our text, read:

Romans 6: 14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Once sin had dominion over you, causing you to fear God's wrath, bringing shame and guilt and doubt and death. Now Christ has claimed dominion over

you. He covers you with His blood, frees you with His forgiveness, lords His death and resurrection over you. Baptism gives you the permission to come into God's presence and to confess your sin to Him, **knowing** he **will** forgive you, read:

1 John 1: 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Baptism means life - new life in the life of Jesus. We no longer live. We died and were buried. Christ now lives within us. His life is our life. Our life is the resurrected life of Jesus. He is at work in and through us. We are "alive to God in Christ Jesus" and it is **only** "in Christ Jesus" that we are alive to God. Apart from Him, we are dead. But joined to Him by Baptism, we live.

St. John wrote, read:

John 15: 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Branches receive their life from the vine to which they are joined. Sap flows through the vine into the branches, bringing life, leaves, buds, fruit. In Holy Baptism, the sap of the Spirit flows through Christ into us, producing in us the Spirit's fruit, read:

Galatians 5: 22, 23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Baptism is a life-giving water. When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well in Samaria he offered her "living water", and told her that those who drink this water will not thirst again. Then he said, read:

John 4: 13, 14 "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Baptism is our daily spring, our daily refreshment, God's birthing, healing, cleansing bath that makes us alive in the life of the Lamb who was slain but lives.

Luther was right when he said that there is a lifetime of learning in Holy Baptism. As we daily count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus by confessing our sin and being absolved we are using our baptism for daily living. So there is a lifetime of dying and rising in the water with Jesus, every day until the end of our days, and in the end, eternal life.

Amen.

May the peace of God which transcends all understanding guard you hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.