

Come On In, The Water's Fine!

Welcome to Family Day. We do this about four times a year to include our children in the Sunday morning worship service. We feel this is an important way to help integrate the children into the life of the church. They need to see teenagers and adults, parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles praying and worshiping God. We value this multi-generational church and this expression of Christian community so we try to be intentional about doing this.

We felt having a baptismal service on Sunday morning for family day would be a good way for the entire church family to learn about the importance of water baptism and to share this experience together.

What's this all about? Why do we baptize people? The first reason is because Jesus told us to. **Baptism is about obedience to Christ.** Jesus is our example in all things and he was baptized. He saw it as important enough that he came to John and asked to be baptized. It was part of the incarnation, Jesus completely identifying with us in our brokenness and sinfulness, yet without sin.

We want to obey Jesus and he thought baptism was important. He said, **"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved but whoever does not believe will be condemned."** **Mark 16:16.** Jesus is not telling us that baptism will save us or that we cannot be saved if we aren't baptized in water. The thief on the cross shows us that you can be saved and go to heaven without having been baptized in water, but that was an exceptional case. Jesus expected that if we were truly his followers and believers, eager to obey him, we would be baptized.

Notice that Jesus said whoever believes and is baptized. That lets us know that believing comes first. In response to the question, "what must we do to be saved?" Peter said, **"Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."** **Acts 2:38.** We repent of our sins and believe in our heart that Jesus is the Son of God who died for our salvation, then baptism is an outward expression or testimony of what has happened on the inside. Baptism doesn't save you. You don't get baptized to be saved, you are baptized because you are saved.

One of the last things Jesus told his disciples was, **"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."** **Matthew 28:19.** It was part of his plan for all of us, to become his disciples and to

carry the message of salvation to the world. That included the act of baptizing those who would become new followers of Christ. If Jesus thought it was important, then it must be important and we want to obey him in all things. So baptism is about obedience to Jesus.

Baptism is about identifying with Christ. At the start of his public ministry, Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan river. By doing so he takes his place among the sinners, the lost and broken so that by faith in him we could take our place beside him as saved and whole and cleansed, new creations in Christ.

Through baptism, we identify with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. The bible says, **“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Romans 6:4-5.**

Think of it this way: **Baptism is a spiritual drama.** Think of it as a five act play, symbolically portraying your salvation experience. **First act: Washing away your sins.** Paul in telling of his salvation experience said, Ananias told him, **“What are you waiting for? Get up, and be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.” Acts 22:16.** We know that baptism doesn't really wash your sins away, but it symbolizes your sins being washed away by your faith in Christ as your Savior and Lord.

Peter said it this way, **“...this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...” 1 Peter 3:21** We are saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus, but baptism symbolizes that salvation, that our sins have been washed away. That symbolism is one of the reasons the early church insisted on flowing water, like being baptized in a river because it symbolized the water carrying your sins away.

Second act: Symbolic death. Remember that in baptism we identify with Christ in his death. We symbolize that we have died to our sinful nature and we are being resurrected to live a new life. **“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Romans 6:4-5.** Paul tells us in Romans 6:6 “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

We walk down into the water of the baptistry, close our eyes, fold our hands over our chest, hold our breath and look like we are dead for just a second, symbolizing that we have died to sins. Then...

Third act: Symbolic burial. We are buried with him through baptism. The preacher lays us back, burying us under the water.

Fourth act: Symbolic resurrection. The preacher then raises us up out of the water symbolizing that in Christ we are resurrected to a new life. Paul said anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Sin doesn't have control over our life any more because Christ lives in us and we live in him. We are under new management, living a new life in Christ.

Fifth act: New life. Baptism is a dramatic representation of the spiritual change that has taken place in your life on the inside. Saved, sins washed away, dead to the old desires (they aren't necessarily gone, you are just dead to them, not giving yourself to them like before), resurrected to a new life in Christ.

When you repent and give your life to Christ you are changed, a different person. When you come out of the water, you are changed. You are all wet! You don't look the same. Your hair is different, your clothes are different because you are wet.

And you are all wet. You aren't just a little bit wet. It's not just your feet and hands that are wet. You are all wet. Baptism shows the totality of the surrender to Christ. Nothing is withheld, nothing is held back. Baptism portrays the fact that our salvation, our surrender to Christ is an all or nothing deal!

That new life can't be hidden. You are all wet. Someone is going to notice. Water is dripping off of you. And baptism is a public profession of your faith. They used to go down to the river for a baptismal service and everyone in town saw you walk down there and walk back with your clothes wet.

Baptism is an outward and public profession and testimony of what Christ has done in your life. He has saved you and washed your sins away and given you a new life. Now you are going to live for him and serve him. The bible says, **“You are all sons [and daughters] of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Galatians 3:26-27.**

You have put on Christ. It's like you have put on the uniform of the Kingdom of God.

You are clothed in Him and everyone can see it. Everyone knows. All wet, all His. All wet, clothed in or covered in water, but truly clothed in or covered in Christ, clothed with his mercy, with his love, with his grace, with his forgiveness. You are living a new way, a new life, through Christ. That's what baptism testifies.

Maybe you have been trying to decide about living for Jesus but you've been reluctant. It's like you keep showing up at the water's edge, sticking your toes into the water to decide if you can live this life or not. It's time to plunge in! You believe, you're there. Repent, ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins and tell him, "I'm placing my trust, my whole life in your hands. I repent of my sins. Forgive me, wash my sins away, change my life." Jump on in and see what happens. Plunge into his love and mercy and forgiveness and grace. Surrender your life to Jesus.

Just like the candidates today will surrender themselves to the pastor baptizing them, they will relax and allow the pastor to do the work, you need to surrender to Jesus today. Relax, lean back and let him do the work. You can't work to be saved, but you can give yourself to him today and he will do the cleansing and the saving.

These folks won't have to work to be covered in water. The very act of baptism takes care of that. You don't have to work to clean yourself up. The very act of salvation, repenting and trusting in the Lord takes care of that. Trust him today.

One last thought. Since baptism is a sign of our dying to sin and being resurrected to a new life in Christ, I always think of my baptism as being a gravemarker of sorts. Here lies Phil Taylor, born, died, born again! Born again, not perfect, not sinless, but a follower of Jesus, living in Christ and Christ living in me by his Spirit.