

Go Public 2017

Welcome to Father's Day 2017. Men, we honor you today and especially the Fathers among us. God bless each one of you. I was reflecting this week just how blessed I am to have had a Father that loved God and loved his wife (my mother, married for 60 years) and loved my brother and me and our families. What an incredible blessing. I thought too about the number of times in the Old Testament God spoke to someone and identified himself in this way "I am the God of your Father." You know, I think that's how I got to know God in the beginning. It wasn't that he was the God of my Sunday School class or the God of my teacher. He was the God of my Father. He was the God that blessed my Dad and made him the man of integrity and kindness that he was. Because of my Dad, I wanted to know the God of my Father. Dads, I hope you are living your life in such a way that if God speaks to you kids and says, "I am the God of your Father," your children will want to know God.

It's a big responsibility, being a Father today. For far too many this is a fatherless generation. Be a Father. Be a Dad. Accept your responsibility, celebrate the role you have as a Dad and love your children and their mother. Serve the Lord, be a godly example for your children and your family. And if your Dad is with you, bless him today and celebrate the gift he is. God bless you and Happy Father's Day to all.

This morning we are going to be baptizing a number of people. The majority will be baptized in the 10:45 service so those of you in the 9:00 service will hear more of the sermon than the later service. We celebrate the decision of all of our candidates to follow the Lord in obedience in water baptism. I want us to understand the significance and importance of water baptism.

Why are we baptized? Maybe we should start by answering the question, Who is to be baptized? All who sincerely repent of their sins and exercise faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives are to be baptized. Peter in his first sermon on the day of Pentecost was asked by the crowd, "what shall we do?" Peter answered, "**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in [upon] the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.**" **Acts 2:38** Jesus said to go into all the world and preach the gospel and make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Who is to be baptized? All who repent and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. That's who disciples are, followers of Christ. That's who we are baptizing today.

Why baptism? The first and foremost reason: **Obedience**. We are baptized in obedience to the command of Christ. It's just that plain and simple. I just quoted the words of Jesus, **"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 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."** **Matthew 28:19** Repent and be baptized in obedience to God's word. That is what we are doing. Understand, baptism doesn't save you. We do this not to be saved but because we are saved through faith in Christ.

Why baptism? Identification with Christ. We identify with Christ in his baptism. Look at Matthew's gospel as he tells us about Jesus' baptism. **"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'"** Jesus replied, **'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.'** Then John consented. **As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'"** **Matthew 3:13-17**

When Jesus was baptized by John he identified with us in our sinful, human state. We know Jesus was sinless, and yet here he is starting his public ministry in the same manner in which all of his public ministry is conducted, associating with and identifying with a lost and dying world. By submitting to baptism he took his place among sinners, where he would always be, among the broken and lost. On the cross he died WITH sinners as he took the place OF sinners. This was Jesus, identifying with us in our sins, in our humanity and in our brokenness, so we could, by his grace, identify with him in his salvation and cleansing.

At Jesus' baptism he was announcing that the Kingdom of heaven had come in a new way, that God's plan of redemption and salvation was breaking in upon the messed up and broken plans of this world. It was the beginning of the good news, that if we would believe upon him, we could be forgiven and we could find new life. At our baptism we are declaring to the world that we have believed upon Jesus, that his kingdom and his rulership has been established in our heart and life. We have received his saving grace and now we are living a new life, living in a new way, a new lifestyle, a new identity in Christ.

Why baptism? It is obedience. It is identification and it is **Symbolism**. Think of water baptism like a play, a drama that we act out, we participate in. Baptism symbolically shows that

our sins have been washed away. The Jews as well as the ancient church insisted baptism take place in “living water,” water that was flowing. It symbolized sin and impurity being washed away. The Apostle Paul in sharing his salvation testimony said Ananias said to him, **“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.” Acts 22:16.** Baptism symbolizes our sins being washed away.

The bible also tells us that baptism is a symbolic portrayal of death, burial and resurrection. We die to our sin and to an old way of life when we are baptized and we rise from the waters of baptism like a resurrection, resurrected to live a new life in Christ. 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.**

Through baptism we are illustrating the drama of salvation. Lowering into the water is a symbol of death. Submersion under the water is symbolic of burial and being raised up from the water is symbolic of the resurrection. We identify with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. Again, we are showing that we consider ourselves dead to sin, our past is buried and we are resurrected to walk in a new life. We will still make mistakes along the way, but we have a new life and a new future in Christ!

Why baptism? A public sign of surrender. It is a public sign we have surrendered our life to Jesus! Baptism was always kind of a public thing. People in our part of the country used to go to the river to be baptized and everyone in town knew what was happening. It was a public declaration of faith. It became more private when we built baptistries inside the church. My Dad was baptized on Christmas Eve in Rock Creek in Sapulpa around 1934 or 35. I’m thinking that was some cold water and it was definitely “going public.” That’s how it should be. Baptism is a sign to everyone of the commitment you have made to live for Jesus. The bible says, **“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Galatians 3:27.** It’s like saying we have put on the new uniform of heaven. You are clothed with Christ. People can tell who you are. You are marked by baptism. You are the people that will be all wet today!

Baptism is saying publicly that you are “all in.” Water baptism is a 100% commitment. When you are baptized you are 100% wet. No one gets baptized a little bit. No one is allowed to keep their hands or feet or the head out of the water. You are immersed. Submerged. It is an

all or nothing commitment. You are saying to everyone, "I belong to Jesus now, 100%." There is no turning back. I have decided to follow Jesus. I turn my back on Satan and sin and the world and I commit my life to Christ.

This is a day to celebrate with those who are being baptized. They have made that decision to follow Jesus. Some have quite a story to tell about God's grace that has delivered them and brought them a long way. Thank God for his grace that saves us. We have a number of children who have asked Jesus to be their Savior and Lord. They are growing up in the faith, growing up in the church. Thank God for children who are being raised up to follow the Lord. This is the next natural step of obedience for them.

Dad's and Mom's, on this Father's day, some of you may have a child being baptized and they have asked Jesus to be their Savior and Lord and maybe you haven't. The bible says "and a little child shall lead them." Maybe this is the day when you decide to follow your children in following Jesus. Perhaps God is saying to you, "I am the God of your children" and you recognize it's time that their God be your God and your Savior as well. Maybe you would like to surrender your heart and life to Jesus just as your children have done. What a great decision that would be! Let's bow our hearts together today.

If you would like to surrender your life to Jesus and ask him to be your Savior and Lord, would you join me here at the front. I want us to pray together. Perhaps you've known the Lord in the past but life has gotten in the way and you just need to renew your commitment to Christ today. Join me here!