

Holy Baptism- “Not of this World” August 27, 2017

**Our Savior’s Way
Worshipping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Tyson Labuhn**

This morning we’re taking a look at another Sacrament as part of our sermon series on Luther’s Small Catechism: Baptism. Baptism is something that happens here at the baptismal font in our worship services from time to time. It’s a special part of a worship service because through it we welcome adults, children, and infants into the family of God, no matter who they are or where they’ve come from. In doing so, we fulfill what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19 - “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.”

There’s a story of a pastor who decided that he would baptize some adults in a river, just like Jesus was baptized long ago in the River Jordan. While he was there, an old man who had been at the local bar for a little too long, noticed that some people were standing on the bank of a river and some were standing in the river. So he walked down into the water and stood next to the pastor. Not quite knowing who the old man was, the pastor turned to the old man and said, “Are you ready to find Jesus?” The old man, looked at the pastor and said, “Yes, I sure am.” The old man, trying to keep his balance in the river, stumbled backwards, and so the pastor leaned the man back under the water, and pulled him up. And as the water parted, the pastor said, “Have you found Jesus?” To which the old man said, “No, I didn’t!”

Upon hearing this, and to make sure that the baptism took, the pastor leaned the old man back, keeping him under the water a little longer this time, and brought him back out of the water.

"Now, have you found Jesus?" asked the Pastor. But the old man again said, "No, I did not." Frustrated by the old man's answers and somewhat embarrassed in front of those who were watching, the pastor decided to dunk the old man in the water again, only 30 seconds longer. But this time, the pastor said with a harsh tone, "Friend, are you sure you haven't found Jesus yet?" The old man, stood up straight, wiped his eyes and said..."No, but are you sure this is where he fell in?"

We don't need to find Jesus in the waters of Baptism because without the Word of God, there is no Baptism. Whether someone is immersed, has water poured on them, or is showered by three little sprinkles of water, it doesn't mean anything without the Word of God being in and with that water, along with a faith that trusts in that Word. In the case of children and infants, Jesus' command is kept by letting the little children come to Him as parents and sponsors make a solemn oath before God and the congregation that they will teach and raise their children in the faith. The growth of children in the faith is something that our congregation supports through prayer as well as our cradle roll program, Grace Place Sunday School, and Confirmation Classes.

Sadly, many of us don't realize that baptism embraces our entire lives as believers and often take this precious gift for granted. You see, baptism isn't something that stops when the skin is wiped dry with a white cloth, when the baptismal candle is extinguished, or even when the child is confirmed in the church. This is because as we live out our baptism, no longer conformed by the pattern of this world, we continue to learn and grow, transforming our minds as we discern God's will. This brings about a rhythm for our daily lives, as we're reminded of our struggle against sin.

You see, living out our baptism includes a personal struggle where each of us tries by the power of the Holy Spirit, to put to death our fallen, selfish, and sinful natures, and through repentance we give them to Jesus who died with them on the cross, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life, as His sons and daughters in this world.

Each of us, from time to time, can feel a need for change. While many in Northern Virginia work hard so that one day they may realize their dreams of a new life or a new beginning, others realize that this change has already happened when they were baptized, and continues even today. It doesn't matter whether or not they retire here in Northern Virginia or go elsewhere, because they are part of a greater family of believers.

When we come to Church by the prompting of the Holy Spirit and remember our baptism at the beginning of our worship service, when we pray, and when we receive a blessing – In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, many in our congregation make the sign of the cross as a reminder that through baptism, we have been marked -both upon our head and our hearts – as one redeemed by Christ.

It's through His Spirit, that we know God cares and loves us deeply. He listens to our prayers even when we can't find the words to say. He provides an abiding peace to His Sons and Daughters. He renews joy from sorrow. He renews strength out of weakness. He forgives the unforgiveable. No matter how uncertain this earthly life might be, by Grace through faith in our baptism, God has given to us a certain eternal future as part of His family, and He has already made the arrangements for us to be Welcomed Home.

And now may that peace which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in that same Christ Jesus, until He comes again to take us all home in Heaven.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.