

Oops

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Okay, let's stand for the reading of God's Word. I'm going to be reading out of Matthew, chapter 3, verse 13 through 17.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him saying, I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me? But Jesus answered him, let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened to him.

And he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him. And behold, a voice from heaven said, this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Let's pray. Father, we want to thank you for our Savior, Jesus, God, that he came into this world not just to identify with us, but to carry our sins on himself. Lord, to save us and God, we realize we owe everything Jesus.

He is our life, our hope, our future. We pray that we would honor him with our lives and with our words. This morning. I pray for those today that will be following Christ in baptism. God, that it be meaningful for them that you'd be doing a spiritual work in their life and helping them to continue on with Jesus.

Lord, we lift up those who are going through sicknesses, and there's many, and we just ask for your healing hand to be on them. Restore them to health, give them strength, vitality, the ability to do the things that you're asking them to do. Now, we commit this time to you in Jesus name. Amen. You may be seated.

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I've been in the book of second Thessalonians in chapter two. And today I would have been speaking about the Antichrist, but I'm not going to, because we're doing baptisms. I want to give a message about baptism and what it means for you. Earlier this week, Jeremy and I met with the people who are going to be baptized. And Jeremy asked them, why do you want to be baptized?

Why do you want to be baptized? And I've been thinking about that meditator now. And it made me think about my own baptism. I was in the eighth grade and I went to a Baptist church. So guess what?

They emphasized baptism. And one Sunday they said, we're going to do a baptism, if you're interested, see so and so. And they will instruct you about baptism. So I did. And I don't know how many weeks it was.

Instead of Sunday school, we met in the church sanctuary and somebody taught us about baptism. And that was a good thing. And so I was just really geared up for this event that I was going to experience at baptism. They had us in a little closet back behind the stage where we had to dress in this robe, this baptismal robe.

And my baptism was traumatic and profound. It was traumatic because I got the robe on. But there was an older guy there, really rough looking guy, and he was struggling with his robe, and he said a curse word.

It was like. It's just like my spiritual bubble popped. And like, this is supposed to be. This an amazing thing. And here you are swearing.

So then we got out and we did the baptisms. And after I confessed Jesus as Lord, he lowered me into the water, and as he started to lift me up, my foot slipped and I fell back into the water. And I said, oops. And the whole congregation laughed. And I'm going to share how I believe that that was somewhat of a picture, what my life would be later on.

But we want to look at baptism. Why should we get baptism? There's some easy answers to that that we see in the Scriptures. First of all, we're commanded to get

baptized. Jesus said, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Therefore go make disciples. And I want to emphasize a disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. That is the first step that I have decided to follow Jesus Christ. Then it says, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. And that is a commitment that we make physically to demonstrate that we are following Jesus.

Then it says, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And so we begin by faith. We continue through faith and following Jesus in baptism. And then we grow in our faith as we learn to obey Jesus Christ. One of the reasons we're here this morning is to hear the word of God so that we can be taught to follow Jesus Christ in our life.

And so that's one of the first things. And this was one of the first acts that people would do whenever they were baptized. You may remember on the day of Pentecost, and Peter got up to preach this message. And over 3,000 people responded. And they said they were cut to the heart.

And they said, brothers, what should we do? And Peter told them, Peter said to them, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And so as you read through the New Testament, you see people coming to Christ, Whether it was Cornelius the Centurion, whether it was the Ethiopian eunuch, whether it was the Philippian jailer, Whether it was Paul on the road to Damascus, when they met Christ, they were told to repent of their sins and then be baptized. And they were. And of course, today we follow them in the same way.

And if you say you're a believer, that you've given your life to Jesus Christ and you're not willing to be baptized, then we'd have to question, are you really following Him? Baptism is one of the very first steps that we take in our walk with Jesus Christ, and so we're commanded. Second, our baptism is a testimony to others. We are publicly declaring that I want to follow Jesus Christ. And we do that through, first of all, through baptism.

Matthew 10:32, it says, so everyone who acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me for men, I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven. And when we get baptized, there's witnesses there, and we are telling them, we're making a public declaration that I want to follow Jesus Christ, and my baptism is a sign of that. Romans 10, 9 and 10 confirms that, where Paul says, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

And baptism is an opportunity for us to confess to others. I have decided to follow Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior testimony. Third, it's also a picture or an illustration of what's happened to us spiritually. First Corinthians 12:13 says, for by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Jews are Greeks, slaves are free, and all of us were made to drink of one spirit.

And the fact is, if someone is a true Christian, whether they followed Christ in water baptism or not, they were baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. They are in Christ, and Christ is in them. And so when someone follows Christ in baptism, it is an outward expression of an inward experience they've had. And that's the important thing. That's what saves someone.

Not the physical water that someone goes under, but the fact that the Holy Spirit has come in their life. And if the inward reality has not happened, then the outward expression doesn't mean a thing. There has to be the reality of the Holy Spirit in you. Paul kind of expands on this principle. Over in Romans 6:1:4, he says, what shall we say then?

Are we to continue in sin, that grace may abound? By no means. How can we who died to sin still live in it? And then he asked, do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life.

And so many forms of baptism, sprinkling, pouring and dunking, we're dunkers, okay? And a lot of reasons for that. Mainly because that's what Christ how he experienced his baptism. And the other day we're talking about it. How many have been to Israel?

Anybody been to the Jordan River? Anybody get baptized in the Jordan River? Okay, there's three of us. And if I go to Israel, I'm going to go to the Jordan river, and I'm going to get baptized, even though I've already been baptized. But that picture of someone going under the water is a picture of dying to self.

I'm no longer living for self and coming out of the water a picture of I'm now alive for Christ. And so when someone gets baptized, that symbolizes the fact that I've died to self, and I want to live for Jesus Christ. And that's an important picture of what actually happens in our life. So baptism does these things, and it's more something that we can see on the outside. But I and others believe that there's more to it than that, that something actually happens spiritually in your life.

You can't see it, you can't explain it, but something in the spiritual realm happens because you made that commitment to follow Christ in baptism. I might mention that in the Protestant faith, there's two sacraments that we observe. Excuse me. One would be communion. We're commanded to do this in remembrance of me when we take the bread and the wine.

And the other is baptism. And it's something that every Christian should be involved in because of their relationship with Jesus Christ. So I've been meditating this all week, the baptism. What happens spiritually to a person when they make that commitment to follow Christ in baptism? And I believe this passage.

If we want to understand that we need to look to Jesus, we need to look to Jesus. And so I was then meditating on this passage we read. And Jesus, who almost everyone believes was 30 years old, that was the age that you could become a priest, he hears about the baptisms that John, the baptism, performs for the repentance of sins on the Jordan river, and he comes to him. And before this, Jesus was living at home with his mother Mary and his brothers. And Sisters working in his father's carpenter shop,

doing a good job, living a great life.

And he knows that God has called him to start his ministry, and it begins at this baptism. But John, when he sees him, he recognizes. And he knows, I shouldn't be baptizing you. You should be baptizing me.

And so Jesus responds, let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. And for me, as I meditated on this, there was a word in there that I think explains what happens spiritually when we're baptized. Anyone want to take a guess at what that word is? We see some important words. Righteousness, fulfilled in us.

I won't keep you on the edge of your seat. The word I believe that really shows what happens in our life. Is the word us. Is the word us. He didn't say, let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for me to fulfill all righteousness.

And you think about that word us. Us is an identification word, isn't it? When you say, it's me, that's me. But if we say it's us, it's me plus someone else, someone that I identify with. And I was talking to Sandra last night, and I told her, we're us.

We're not Jim and Sandra. We're one because of our commitment that we made when we married each other. And even though we're two separate individuals in a sense, and spiritually, we're one in Christ. And so what Christ is doing as he comes to be baptized doesn't need to be baptized. He's never sinned.

He's God in the flesh. And yet what he does is he identifies with us.

He came to save you and I from our sins. And the only way he could do that was to become one of us, to become a human being so that he could carry our sins to the cross and die for them, taking our place. And so this identification, and as a result of that, after he came out of the waters, it first of all says the heavens were open to him. I believe that means that all of a sudden he had a spiritual conception of things that he didn't have before that time. He knew he was the Son of God.

He knew that he'd come into the world to save our sins. But I believe that his spiritual perception was opened as a result of making that commitment to follow, to be baptized, to be. To identify with you and I and our sins. And then it says that the Spirit of God came down in the form of a dove. And that's interesting.

Because Jesus Christ had the Holy Spirit. He, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were together forever and couldn't be separated. But yet you go back into the Old Testament. Whenever God selected someone to do a work for him, it says the Holy Spirit would come upon them in power. And this was a picture that the Holy Spirit came upon him to equip him for the work that he was going to do for you and I to live a sinless, perfect life, to be a testimony for the love of God and His grace.

And then finally to go to the cross and die for you. And then after that, it says, there was a voice from heaven, this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. And whenever someone makes that commitment to follow Jesus Christ with all of their heart, I believe that God the Father, equips us with the Spirit. We may already have the Holy Spirit, but to anoint us for whatever purpose he has for our life. And he is well pleased.

And what that does is it opens the door for God to start working your life to accomplish his purpose in you, preparing you for all eternity, but also using for his glory. And so, in a sense, I believe that when someone is baptized and when they're doing that out of a good intent, they really want to follow Jesus Christ. That those things happen, that we've identified with Jesus Christ, we acknowledge him as our Lord and Savior. We confess that we want to live for Him. As a result of that, God, through the Holy Spirit, starts to equip us to live for him and stay faithful for him.

And then I believe that God is well pleased because we have made that commitment. And we may not see this happen in our life or understand it, but I believe it's something that God does. And everyone who is truly put their desire in Christ and wants to follow Him. God was pleased when Jesus identified with you and I. He equipped him for the ministry he had.

In the same way, I believe he does this for you and I when we identify with Jesus Christ. And so how does this apply to us? How does this apply to you and I? And I believe it's this. When we get baptized, we are identifying with Jesus Christ.

We are saying, my life is his and his life is me. I'm making a commitment to follow him this day. And I'm believing that making that commitment, that he will begin a work in me that will change me and will prepare me for the work he gives me and will prepare me for spending all of eternity with Him. We may not understand this, we may not feel it, but I Believe that's something God does in the spiritual realm when we do it in a way that honors Him. Interesting passage over in First Peter, Chapter 3, Verse 21 to 22.

And Paul and Peter says, baptism, which corresponds to this now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Another translation says, a pledge of a good conscience. And so when someone gets baptized, they should be pledging with a good conscience, with all their heart. I want to follow Jesus Christ. And if they pledge that with a good conscience, I believe that God is working in that.

It says, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities and powers, having been subjected to him. And that goes back to the fact that Christ has all authority. And because he has all authority, he can accomplish everything and anything in our lives that he desires. And by submitting to him, we allow him to work in our lives. So when we get baptized with a good conscience, desiring to identify with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, God does a work in our lives that goes way beyond the physical act of baptism.

Way beyond. I'm going to go back to my baptism. As I mentioned, it was traumatic. I also believe it was prophetic. Traumatic in the sense of, here I am spiritually ready for God to do a work in my life, and this guy curses sin.

I hope he was saved. I don't know. But it's a reminder that we're not going to get away from sin in this life. And just because we make that commitment to Christ, we not only

deal with our own sin, we have to deal with the sin of other people. And we need to be aware of that.

And God allows that to come in our life because he uses it to train us to desire him more and more. My baptism was also prophetic. As I mentioned, when I came out of the water and I slipped, I said, oops.

And I've been saying that ever since.

We're walking with Christ, doing the best we can, but we slip, don't we? We often fall into sin.

And it would have been over except for the fact that God was there to lift us up and to go on in our walk with Jesus Christ Couldn't help but be reminded of Peter. When they were crossing the lake in the boat and they saw Christ walking on the water, they were scared. It's a ghost. And Jesus said, don't be afraid, it is I. And Peter responded, if it's you, then tell Me to get out of the boat and walk to you.

And Jesus said, come. And Peter amazingly stepped out of a boat and he walked on water until he almost came to Christ. He saw the waves, he became fearful and he started to sink. And that happens to us. We're doing well and something happens and we become fearful, we start to sink.

But just like Peter, we can cry out, lord, save me, and Christ reaches out and lifts him up. In the same way when we made a commitment to follow Jesus Christ. Yeah, we're going to experience sin in our life. We're going to experience times when we've slipped and fallen. But if we'll cry out to God with a good conscience, he lifts us up.

And we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for that, that he alone is the one who is keeping us close to him, walking with him. And so I just want to emphasize for those that are being baptized, but even for those of us who have. And yes, it's a respond to a command and we should respond. It's a testimony to others that we've made that commitment to follow Christ. You read sometimes in history that people would make a commitment to follow Christ and they lived in societies that were against God and

persecuted him.

But nothing happened until they decided to get baptized, made a public profession of their faith. They're not fooling around. They really are going to follow Christ. And it's that it's an illustration of what really happened to us, that we died to sin and now we're alive to Christ. But I also believe it's a time where God will work in our lives, taking that good confession, that good conscience, and doing a work beyond anything that we could have ever conceived.

And for those of us that are experiencing that, we can say Amen to that. It's been all God and I have slipped. I've been around sin, I've been in sin, and yet God keeps lifting me out of it and helps me to walk with Him. And so as we later today, as we experience others baptism, it should be a reminder of our commitment to the Lord and remembering that at one time we professed our faith before others. We identified with Jesus Christ.

He's been working our life. It's a time to be praying for those that are making that commitment that it be real in their life and they go on with Jesus Christ no matter what they're facing. And so just to summarize, yes, it's a physical act that we do. And again, there's things that we see in that, but we believe that it's more than that. There's something spiritually that happens in our life when we make that commitment to follow Jesus Christ in baptism.

And so we look forward to that this afternoon. I pray that if you have an opportunity, you will come to the picnic and fellowship together again. Going to be great weather at the lake. Beautiful spot. And we'll have the joy of seeing others make that commitment to follow Jesus Christ in baptism.

Let's pray.

Father. First of all, I thank you for our Savior, Jesus Christ, that He identified with us, even though he was sinless where it had nothing to be baptized for. He was already fully committed to you because he was your son. And yet he was willing to go under the waters, signifying he was taking our sin upon Himself to die for us. And we thank

you that he was willing to do that, that he loved us enough to die for us.

And I pray, Father, that you would help us to identify with him, to be willing to die with him in order that we can live for him. Pray in Christ's name. Amen.