

Rooted: Baptism & Communion

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[0:00] Welcome here for this Sunday, October 15th. My name is Kent Dixon and it is my joy to be the pastor here. So welcome to all of you who are here this morning.

Whether you're joining us in person, some people join us online, listen later on in the week on the podcast or on the sermon phone in line. So welcome to however and whomever is connecting in whatever way they're doing that.

So this morning we're continuing in our sermon series, Rooted. And over the past weeks we've been considering many things that are the foundation of our faith. Things that we need to remember and understand clearly to remain rooted firmly in Christianity.

And so far over the past five weeks we've looked at the Bible. We've considered the attributes of God. We've sought to deepen our understanding of the Trinity. We talked about prayer.

And last week we spent some time on Thanksgiving, as people are still joking about, considering angels, demons, and spiritual warfare. Happy Thanksgiving. But every sermon in this series is available, will be available on our website and on the podcast.

[1:09] So if you want to catch up, they're different topics, stand-alone topics, but they are part of that larger series. So if you've missed any, you can always revisit them to dig deeper again, or catch up on any that you may have missed.

So a Lutheran minister and a Baptist pastor were discussing baptism. And the Baptist made a passionate argument on the subject. The Lutheran asked the Baptist if a person was baptized if water came up to their chin.

No. Up to their nose? No. Eyebrows? No. You must understand, the Baptist pastor said, completely immersed until his head is covered.

That's what I've been trying to tell you, the Lutheran said. It's only a little water on top of the head that counts. Little baptism joke. Little pastor joke. So I have Lutheran friends that I went to university with at Concordia across the river.

And we have teased each other for years about this. And now some of them are Lutheran ministers, and I'm a Baptist pastor. Interesting. So we've joked about it.

[2:19] I've teased them about sprinkling being indecision. And they've said believers' baptism is overkill. So kind of funny.

So as you can tell, this morning's focus is beginning on baptism. So baptism and communion is what we're going to be looking at this morning. And I suggested to someone this morning who I know is baptized, maybe it's time for you to consider baptism yourself.

And they just said, no, be quiet. So we're going to start by seeking to answer some questions about baptism. First, who should be baptized?

What does the Bible say? Well, in Acts 10, we learn that Peter meets a man named Cornelius, who's actually a Roman centurion. And a Gentile.

And Scripture tells us that Cornelius was a godly man. He was a committed follower of Jesus. And many consider Cornelius to have been the first Gentile convert to Christianity.

[3:18] It's kind of interesting. Bear with the road construction noise outside. It is not the coming of the end times or anything like that. It is merely road compaction.

So then reading in Acts 10, verses 47 and 48, Peter says, The Holy Spirit, we understand, was just as evident in Cornelius as he was in anyone else who trusted Jesus as Lord.

And in fact, only those who truly trust Jesus as Lord receive the Holy Spirit. That's what the Bible tells us. And Peter is also clear that people are not baptized until they believe in Jesus. That's the order of things. And so we recognize immediately there that baptism is for believers. People have declared their belief, their discipleship, their commitment to Jesus Christ. So we also need to recognize and remember that baptism is not a requirement for salvation. Is that a surprise to you?

[4:38] Is that a shock? Baptism is actually done after someone has already been saved and redeemed from their sins. That's again the order of things.

So think about this for a moment. If baptism brought salvation, then salvation would essentially come from human beings, at least in part. Because human beings perform the rite of baptism. I've been in that tank with people. And glory be to God, by God's grace, I get to participate in someone's baptism. But I'm not the one who actually makes the change.

I don't save someone by performing the rite of baptism. Salvation is a free gift from God. It is undeservable.

It is unearnable. But it is freely given by God's grace. Amen? So can you recognize that if baptism was necessary for salvation, Jesus probably would have been baptizing people like crazy, wouldn't he, during his earthly ministry?

[5:50] But as we read in John 4, verses 1 and 2, it says, Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus did not, Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples, that little aside there, he, Jesus, left Judea and departed again for Galilee.

Jesus didn't baptize people himself. And he intentionally, when he came to recognize that people were thinking, Oh, it's Jesus that's doing it, he intentionally took the focus off himself when others thought that he was doing that.

He left that area. I think we can also recognize that if baptism was necessary for salvation, Paul would have been doing it as well, right? If that was a priority, Jesus and Paul would have no question been baptizing people like crazy.

But we read in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 17, For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, Paul says, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Paul says, that's not my job. My job is to point to him. Baptism doesn't save. It shows other people that you have been saved.

[7:18] Does that make sense? You've probably heard a variation of this expression before. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward change.

Or an outward declaration, other people say, of an inward transformation. So, interesting words, interesting choices of words, but they reflect the reality of it.

An outward expression of inward change, or an outward declaration of an inward transformation.

So, if baptism in itself doesn't save us, if it's not a requirement for salvation, then why do it at all?

Why get baptized? Well, first of all, baptism identifies us with Christ. Matthew 28, verses 19 and 20 says, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. When we're baptized in the name of Christ, in his name, we're declaring our allegiance to him.

[8:35] We're taking a stand, making an open public declaration of our new identity. We're showing the world that we're committed to and identifying with Jesus Christ as a disciple, as one of his followers.

We're saying that he bought us with his sacrifice. And so now, we are publicly, openly dedicating our lives to him.

So the second reason why I get baptized is because it's an act of obedience. That passage from Matthew we just read in the Great Commission, and baptism is one of the commands in it.

That is the Great Commission, and that's one of the commands in it. So that by being baptized, we're doing what Jesus asked us to do. Jesus has asked us to do this, therefore, we do it as his followers.

He wants us to tell the whole world, I belong to Jesus, and I'm taking steps to prove it. It's about submitting to Jesus as Lord in our life, and doing what he wants us to do.

[9:47] So what does baptism actually mean? Romans 6, verses 3 and 4 says, So baptism, friends, is a picture of what Jesus did for us.

He died, he was buried, and he rose again. Baptism is also, as we touched on a minute ago, a visual demonstration.

It's a declaration of what has happened in our own lives. It demonstrates our death to sin and our new life in Christ.

And it pictures being born again into that brand new life in Jesus. So every person who declares themselves to be a follower of Jesus should be baptized.

There are a few friends that we have that I was hoping would be here this morning so they can hear me say this, because I'm working on them with baptism. But this is an important message for all of us, whether we've been baptized or not.

[11:10] It is a good reminder of why we did it. If you're like me, and I was baptized by my uncle when I was eight, nine years old, in a very, I've said this before, a rusty baptismal tank in a very tiny church.

I didn't have to get a tetanus shot, so that was good. But that's a memory that I'll always cherish, because it was a church where lots of my family still attend. It's a church where God laughs periodically because I'll find another connection to that church from someone else I just met or someone I know.

So our baptism is important to us. It's important to remember it. It's important to be reminded of the significance of it. And every believer should publicly declare by baptism that they are not who they used to be.

They're now a follower of Jesus Christ, and they go public. They take public steps to show it. So that is why we baptize as Christians.

And what I was going to say to a few people, too, and if you're listening this morning or you're here this morning, and you have not been baptized, and your biggest challenge, your biggest stumbling block, is you would rather be sitting there listening to me talk than be in there talking to this group.

[12:31] We can get around it. So don't let your fears of public speaking prevent you from being baptized, because I know lots of people, that's the biggest stumbling block for them.

They love Jesus. They want to be baptized, but they're terrified of speaking, public speaking. I think I've told you this before. Jerry Seinfeld tells the joke of, the fear of death is less than the fear of public speaking, which means people would rather be in the coffin than giving the eulogy.

Is that true for you? Maybe it is. So let's move on to our other topic for this morning, and that is communion. What does communion, we often refer to it as the Lord's Supper, what does it mean? What is it all about? Well, as the name implies, Jesus started it. It is the Lord's Supper. As we read in 1 Corinthians 11, 23 to 26, you know this passage, and I usually read it on Sundays when we celebrate communion together.

It says, In the same way, also, he took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

[14:01] Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

On the night he was betrayed. It was the night before Jesus was turned over to be tried and ultimately crucified. It's called the Last Supper because this was the last meal that Jesus would share with his disciples before he was crucified.

Hence the name. It was also the Passover, as you may know. That was the time that commemorated God delivering the Jewish people out of Egypt. God told the Jews to sacrifice a lamb and put the blood on the frame above their door.

And everyone under that blood was saved. Through this meal, Jesus was bringing in a new way a new covenant between God and the people.

You've heard me talk about the Messianic covenant before. That's Jesus. Jesus himself would become the Passover lamb. would become the perfect sacrifice under whose blood all are saved.

[15:18] So what are the elements of the Lord's Supper? The bread represents the body of Jesus. He gave his body for us.

Jesus was beaten. He was nailed to a cross. He died a physical death. His body was literally broken so that we could live.

The cup, whatever tradition you come from, the wine, the juice, sometimes we say. I used to tease the pastor that I, the church where we used to attend, because he would say the juice.

And I said, when you say juice, it just makes me think of like a juice box for a child. So I said, if you could say cup, just say cup. And he said, oh yeah, no problem. But we know it's juice, right?

We, when we had our chosen session this week, it was Jesus' miracle turning water into wine. And I said, so Jesus turned all that water into Welch's.

[16:19] Because that's, many of us, that's our tradition, right? Is have a cup of Welch's grape juice. But it's still, no matter the fact that we may recognize it, have different kinds of elements in different ways, the blood still represents, the cup still represents the blood of Jesus Christ.

And in many ways, blood represents the vitality of a person. If you're injured and you bleed out, the odds are you will not survive.

You will die. Without blood, there is no life. Blood is a literal representation and a factual, actual representation of our life, our vitality.

Jesus shed his blood on the cross. His blood, his life, poured out and ran down to the foot of the cross. Jesus gave his life's blood to pay for our sin.

So why do we have the Lord's Supper? Why do we do it? Well, first, it's a memorial. It's a way to remember what Jesus did for us.

[17:32] We do it to remember the price, the cost of our salvation. The price that we didn't have to pay, but was freely given to us.

We do it to celebrate our salvation. Signed, sealed, delivered by the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And we also do it looking forward to, and I don't know that we often think this way, we celebrate the Lord's Supper together looking forward to the time when our salvation will be complete.

When we will see Jesus and those who have gone before us again. So how often should we do, there's all these different terms, how often should we do, take, receive, celebrate, commemorate the Lord's Supper together?

Well, just as we heard in 1 Corinthians 11, 26, for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

There's no established frequency in the Bible. You can look. It doesn't say every Sunday, once a month, every year, you will do this until I return.

[18:50] It doesn't say, do it every time you get together and have what is called mass. It doesn't say that either. And many churches have settled on once a month.

That's quite common. Again, the first Sunday of the month. I know lots of churches who do it the last Sunday of the month. I know churches who do it on Christmas Eve. I have Catholic friends who every time they go to mass, they have communion, which is potentially every Sunday.

So it's important that we do it often enough that the significance of what it represents is always in our minds. Does that make sense? It needs to be fresh in our minds.

But in my mind, we also shouldn't do it so often that it becomes too familiar, becomes too common, becomes just a matter of habit.

It shouldn't ever become something that we do just going through the motions and forgetting what it means. So how should we approach the Lord's Supper?

[19:51] And when I say approach, I don't mean in terms of logistics, because you say, well, I approach you at the front and not logistics, but in terms of mindset. What is our mindset?

Should it be when we receive communion? Well, 1 Corinthians 11, 27 to 31 makes it clear for us. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a person examine himself then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judge ourselves truly, we would not be judged. If we judge ourselves truly, we would not be judged.

So it's clear there that we need to take it seriously. I remember, as I was growing up, there was a time when you said, oh, there's a certain age you need to be.

[21:01] There's a certain level of awareness or understanding of your faith and what it means that you should have. But I think that's different for every person. I don't think we should necessarily sit back, you'll see me give communion to children.

But I know that they have an awareness of what they're doing and why they're doing it. And that's important. So we need to clearly take it seriously because Jesus paid a terrible price.

When we reflect on his death and his sacrifice, it should be a serious matter for us. As you heard in 1 Corinthians there, we need to examine ourselves.

It's okay to let communion pass on a Sunday. When you're here, if you don't feel your heart is right, if you don't feel you're in a position, of health in your relationships or things like that, if you feel like you and God are a little bit at odds in the moment, you can let it pass.

It's better to let it pass than to partake with the wrong heart, honestly. So we need to make sure, as I say, that we're coming to it with the right attitude, with the right perspective, with humility and thankfulness and gratitude.

[22:20] We should be thankful for what Jesus has done for us. We need to consider what it cost him to save us. It cost him everything. We should be seeking to honor Jesus in the way we're participating.

We celebrated communion together just a few weeks ago, and we will again soon. But the reminders that we've had here will apply to us every time we celebrate it together, every time we observe it together.

So these are important things to be reminded of. The words that you hear on Sundays when we take communion together also help set the stage for us on those Sundays, help us be reminded of the heart that we're to come forward with.

So this morning we've reflected on baptism. Who should be baptized? Why we should get baptized? What baptism means? It's importance and significance.

And we've considered communion. communion. The Lord's Supper. What it means. What the elements of it are. Why we have it. How often. The perspective and attitude we should have as we participate in it.

[23:33] And that is a lot to consider. A lot to think about. But as Protestant Christians, baptism and communion are essential rites.

R-I-T-E-S. Sacred ceremonies or acts that are foundational parts of our faith. And if you're hearing this message and are a follower of Jesus Christ, but you have not been baptized, I encourage you to talk to someone about that.

Like a pastor, for example. While baptism doesn't save you, it's an important public declaration that we have been called to make.

And it is a great time of celebration as a body of Christ. And as I said before, don't let the public speaking part scare you off because there are creative ways around it.

Next month when we celebrate communion together again, I hope you'll be reminded of the things that we've considered this morning. And the experience will be all the more meaningful to you as you remember.

[24:42] Amen. Amen.