

Baptism and the God Who Saves

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[0 : 00] And once again, good morning, everybody. It's really good to see you. And I hope that we don't just get to see you this morning, but this afternoon as well.

As you've heard, Lord willing, we're going to be gathering down at Eichelman, starting around 3. And then at 3.30, we're going to make our way out onto the beach.

And Pastor Mike is going to head out into the waters of Lake Michigan with nine souls. And he's going to ask each one of them two things.

He's going to ask them if they've put their faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. And he's going to ask them if they will follow Jesus Christ all the days of their lives.

And assuming that they answer yes, which is what we're expecting, given the conversations that we've had with these people, Pastor Mike is going to lower them down in the water in the name of the Father and of the Son.

[0 : 58] And of the Holy Spirit. And then he'll bring them back up out of the water. So, if I was to ask you, what's happening in that moment when they go down into the water, and then they come back up, what would you say?

You would probably say, well, they're being baptized. And I would say, yes, that is certainly true. But then if I pressed you a little bit and I asked you, but what is baptism?

Would you be able to answer that question? So, what my goal is this morning in this sermon, what I want for you is that you would come out of this morning with clarity around that question of what baptism is.

I want you to be able to answer that question with some confidence. And not just that, what I also want to do this morning, Lord willing, is to wake your heart up to the glorious reality that baptism pictures.

That it shows us that we worship a God who has triumphed over sin at great cost to himself. That he has pursued us in love.

[2 : 16] And now because of Christ's death and resurrection, we amazingly get to share in his victory over death and sin. And that is an amazing thing.

Amen? Yes, it is. So, I'm going to structure my sermon this morning around four questions that I hope will be relatively easy to follow. We'll see. Here's where we're going.

Four questions, four W's. Why do we baptize? W number one. What is baptism? Who do we baptize?

And when do we baptize? So, that's our why, what, who, and when questions about baptism.

I'm going to try my best to answer those as clearly as I can this morning. So, first question. Why do we baptize? Can anyone guess? I'm opening this up.

[3 : 13] This is interactive right now. Can anyone guess what the best Sunday school answer is to the question of why do we baptize? Because he said so.

Yes, exactly. That is a perfect Sunday school answer. So, let's show that the Bible backs that up, right? Let's open up our Bibles. We're going to go to Matthew chapter 28.

If you are using a pew Bible, you're going to go to page 993. And we're going to read what Jesus says here. Matthew 28, 19.

These are the words of our Savior. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Doing what? Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. So, Jesus said it, so we do it. Simple as that. Now, we could just call it a day. We can move on to the next point.

[4 : 16] And we would be on track for the shortest and most adored sermon in Christ the King history. But we are not going to do that. We're going to slow down just a minute.

We're going to consider this with the reverence that it deserves. So, we're already in the book of Matthew in our Bibles, which is great. Let's go back a little bit earlier in the book of Matthew. We're going to go to chapter 3.

That's pages 960 and 961 of your Bible. Matthew chapter 3. I love the sound of pages of the Bible turning.

The longer answer to this question, why do we baptize, is it's not only that Jesus commanded baptism, but He modeled it for us, okay? So, I'm going to set the scene by starting in verse 1. In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord.

[5 : 28] Make his paths straight. Now, John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

If you have young boys in the house like I do, this is one of their favorite characters in the Bible. Then, Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, to John the Baptist, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. So, Matthew chapter 3, this is the point at which Jesus is going to go public with His ministry for the first time.

And it starts with John the Baptist preparing the way of the Lord in two ways. By preaching a message of repentance, right? Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And then number two, by baptizing those who repent and confess their sins. Which means that even before the baptism of Jesus, John's ministry of baptism gives us some understanding of what the purpose of baptism is.

[6 : 36] That John is baptizing those who are believing a message of repentance, and their baptism is accompanied by a confession of their sins. So, even though Jesus hasn't been revealed yet, that in John's baptism, there is a call towards a heart posture that recognizes, I have done wrong in God's sight, and I am a sinner.

Okay? So, that's there right away. But, John's baptism is not a sufficient baptism. Because John the Baptist is not a sufficient baptizer.

And he's aware of that. If you look down at verse 11, John says, I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. So, John the Baptist, he's an incredible man. He's a faithful man. Jesus himself, in Matthew 11, 11, he says that among women, there is no one greater who's been born than John the Baptist, which is quite a statement coming from the second person of the Trinity.

But John is there merely to point the way. He's there merely to point the way to Jesus. There is a baptizing of the soul that man is not capable of.

[8 : 01] There is a work of the heart that can only be done by the Holy Spirit. And only one man, the God-man, Jesus Christ, can baptize like that.

And that becomes even clearer in the next verses. So, let's go to verses 13 through 17, still in chapter 3. 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. John the Baptist 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.

[9 : 13] Jesus Christ, in his baptism, he's anointed by the Holy Spirit with the joyful approval of the Heavenly Father.

This is one of the coolest moments of the Trinity showing up in the New Testament. And just as we see the Trinity present in Christ's example for us in his baptism, so the Trinity is present in Christ's command to baptize at the end of Matthew, like we just read, where he calls us to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

This is this awesome full circle moment from the start of Jesus' ministry to his last words to us before he goes up into the clouds. Now, if you know your Bible and your theology, you might have a

question at this point, which is if our baptism is connected to this idea of repentance and turning away from sin, and Jesus had no sin, then why is he being baptized right now?

Which, to be fair, is basically John the Baptist's reaction, right? He's like, what is going on here? Like, you need to be baptizing me. I should not be baptizing you. What's happening? Douglas O'Donnell, he's really helpful here, he writes this.

He says, Put plainly, Jesus was baptized not for his sake, but ours. When we go down into the waters of baptism, it is a symbol of the cleansing of our sins.

[10:47] As the water pours over our heads, we are made clean in the sight of God. When Jesus went down into the water of the Jordan River, the opposite happened.

He began to take on our sin, our dirt, all the scum of the baptized. Whatever drop of water might have entered into his mouth was his first taste of the cup of God's wrath, which he would drink in full measure on the cross.

Jesus, the son of God's plan of sin substitution.

So, before Jesus goes into the waters, he does not confess any sin because he does not have any sin to confess. He does not repent because there is nothing for him to repent of.

By being baptized, Jesus is beginning the work of fulfilling God's beautiful story. He's showing us where all this is headed right from the beginning of his ministry.

[11:53] And where that is headed is towards him dying, taking our sin upon himself, and then being raised again to a newness of life so that we might be washed clean.

It's a story headed towards his death and his resurrection. So, if that's what's happening in Jesus' baptism, what's happening in our baptism?

That takes us to the second question this morning. What is baptism? So, I'm going to give you a definition. This comes from Bobby Jameson.

If you're taking notes, this is the definition that I want you to write down because it's short and sweet. And that is this. Baptism is where faith goes public.

Baptism is where faith goes public. Now, if I was going to flesh that out, here's what I'd say. And don't worry about writing this down.

[12:56] Baptism is a public act of obedience in which a church affirms and proclaims a believer's union with Christ and his people by immersing them in water in the name of the Trinity.

And the believer proclaims their allegiance to Christ and his people. In other words, it's where faith goes public.

Okay? So, I'm going to break this down into some bite-sized chunks that I hope will be helpful. Let's start with this idea of baptism as a public act of obedience.

Okay? That means that baptism, by definition, is not a private event. A private baptism would be kind of like a press conference where there's no press and it's in a closet.

Okay? It's like that by definition, that's not what it is. Right? A baptism is public just like a press conference is public. And we see this right away in the baptisms of John.

[14:01] What we saw in chapter 3, you've got people coming from all over being baptized in the Jordan River. It's super public. Jesus, he's baptized in a very public way.

Everyone there that day bore witness to the fact that the Holy Spirit descended upon him and the Father said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

It was a public event. And if you look at the baptisms throughout the book of Acts, what you're going to see over and over again is the public nature of baptism.

So, it's a public act, but what does it do? It's where a church affirms and proclaims a believer's union to Christ.

So, I mentioned the church in that definition, right? If you go out to Lake Michigan today and you say, you go into the water and you say, I baptize myself in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and you drop under the water and then you come back up, that was not a baptism.

[15:08] Because a baptism always involves a believer and a church. Jesus' words to us in the Great Commission are really important for understanding this.

So, we've already spent some time in Matthew. Let's go back to where we started in Matthew, Matthew 28, at the end of the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew 28, the Great Commission, Jesus says this, All authority, that's an important word, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, make disciples and baptize them. So, Jesus, who has all the authority in heaven and on earth, he tells the apostles, that's who he's talking to in this verse, he tells them to go and to baptize.

So, it's this kind of extension of his authority. He basically installs them as judges with the authority to recognize who is a disciple of Jesus Christ.

They are authorized by Jesus to baptize. But, here's the plot twist for us today, is that all of the apostles died nearly 2,000 years ago.

[16:25] So, who has the authority to do baptisms now? And I would say that the answer is the local church. That the church carries on the authority of the apostles to baptize believers into the family of God.

Which is a significant responsibility, by the way, and it's not one that we take lightly. So, baptism, it's this public act of obedience where the church and the believer affirm and proclaim the believer's union to Christ.

Christ. The believer's union to Christ. And this is the most awesome part that we're going to talk about right now. This is the best part of what we're going to talk about.

I want you to turn with me. Let's go to Romans chapter 6. Again, if you're in your pew Bibles, if you go to page 1120, that's where we're going to be.

Romans chapter 6. Romans chapter 6. And this is verses 3 and 4 towards the beginning of the chapter. The apostle Paul writes, So, baptism is a sign.

[18:05] It's a representation of a real spiritual transformation in the heart of a believer through Jesus Christ.

The baptism of the body is a picture of the very real baptism of our heart that has already taken place.

If you are a believer in this room, that means that something astounding has happened to you.

There's a miracle that's actually taken place inside of your soul.

Because every single one of us in this room was born a sinner. We are sinners by nature and we're sinners by choice.

It's who we are. It is what we want. Every single one of us. That means that we come into this world with no desire for God. We come into this world without any respect for God.

[19:04] No recognition or appreciation of who He is. And as a matter of fact, in Ephesians 2, Paul describes our situation as so hopeless that we might as well be dead.

That's how we're described. Dead in our trespasses. Sons of disobedience, which is not a cool biker gang name. That was our identity. That's who we are before Jesus.

Children of wrath, right? Now that, talking about ourselves as sinners, that is a profoundly different way than how our culture likes to talk.

I want you to feel the weight of how desperate you were before God saved you.

And if you are not a believer this morning and you're unsure about this whole Jesus thing, first off, I am very glad that you are here.

[20:06] I want to speak a quick word because I know that this kind of preaching, when you hear about this sin and need for a Savior, it can sometimes feel, maybe from your perspective, like I'm trying to heap shame upon you.

And I want you to know that that is not my intention at all. What I want to do is faithfully represent how the Bible talks about the significance of our sin.

Okay? So according to the Bible, the biggest need in your life is not a significant paycheck. Your biggest need is not having a reliable car.

It's not a bill of clean health or a satisfying marriage or getting into the college of your choice. The biggest need in your life is for you to be in relationship with the God of the universe.

That is the thing that you need the most. And your sin, tragically, it separates you from Him.

Because God is so unbelievably good and our sin is so unbelievably bad.

[21:21] God, if we could all see our sin for what it is, we would actually break down in despair because we know that there's just no way. There's no way that a good God could ever accept me on my own merit.

It's just not going to happen. But this, here comes the good news. Okay? This is the good news. God did not expect us to earn our way to Him.

He instead came to us. Jesus Christ, who is both fully God and fully man, who is totally righteous, which means that He only did what was good 100% of the time.

He only thought what was right 100% of the time. He only did what was good to other people 100% of the time. He came to take our sin upon Himself so that our sin that deserved eternal separation from God, He took that upon Himself and He went to the cross and He paid an infinite debt in full. All of the punishment that we should have paid, He paid a great cost to Himself. And this is the beauty of John 3.16, right?

[22 : 43] For God so loved the world that He did what? He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

So if you're here in this room and you haven't believed that yet, that's the incredible offer that is before you this morning.

If you are wondering what the purpose of your life is, it's that you were made for relationship with God. And God Himself took down the barrier that was separating you from Him.

So if you haven't put your faith in Jesus Christ, I would love to meet you after the service. I'd love to talk to you about that. Pastor Mike would love to talk to you about that. Now, okay, let's shift the focus back to the believers in the room.

So believers, we were all once dead in our sins. That should be clear to you. We're all in agreement. We were all once dead in our sins, okay? But when you believed in Jesus Christ, something incredible happened to you, which is that in the midst of all of your sin and all of your rebelliousness and all of your selfishness, God Himself, He set His love upon you.

[24 : 08] And He didn't do this in a, I'm just going to tolerate them from now on for the rest of the Christian life until they get to heaven. That's not how God set His love upon us.

He poured out affection and love upon you. And in your worst moment when you're dead in your sins, He claims you. And He says, you are mine forever.

And no one's ever going to snatch you out of my hand. That's what God has done. And with the power of the Holy Spirit, He made you alive.

Your old self died with Christ that day. Christ's precious blood, it paid for every evil or wicked thing you ever did.

And every sinful thing you're ever going to do, paid in full at the cross. And God's anger at your sin that should have been poured out on you was poured out on Jesus Christ as He raised you to new life.

[25 : 10] Which means that you are united to Christ. That's your identity. You are united to Christ now. And not just now, but forever. You stand in His love until He returns or calls you home.

So baptism is a picture of the fact that we have been united to Christ in His death and in His resurrection. Just like Romans chapter 6 says.

Now it's clear to point out that baptism itself, the act of baptism itself does not unite us to Christ. It's symbolizing the spiritual reality that has already taken place.

Right? So this is the church saying, this is what has happened to this brother. This is what has happened to this sister. And it's the believer saying, this is what has happened to me.

Jesus saved me. I want to live the rest of my life for Him. Baptism is where faith goes public.

[26 : 20] So to restate the fuller definition here. Baptism is a public act of obedience. In which a church affirms and proclaims a believer's union to Christ and His people.

By immersing them in water in the name of the Trinity. And the believer proclaims their allegiance to Christ and to His people. Now, if you are still following me at this point.

You're hearing me use language about both the believer being united to Christ. And you're also hearing some language about the church. Right? About Christ's people.

Proclaiming allegiance to Christ's people. And I say that because sometimes we can think of baptism as an individual experience.

We've already talked a little bit about how important the church is in this process. And this is why in Acts 2.41. After Peter preaches his sermon at Pentecost.

[27 : 17] Luke, the author of Acts. He reports to us. Because those who accepted his message. Peter's message. Were baptized. And about 3,000 that day were added to their number.

So when you get baptized. You were going public with the fact that you belong to Jesus. And you're also going public with the fact that now you belong to Jesus' people. So I'm going to use an imperfect analogy with football.

Since football season is starting up again. A few months ago we had the NFL draft. Right? Let's say that there is a player. And he is wanting to be drafted into the greatest football team in the NFL. We all know who that is. It's the Green Bay Packers. Oh no. We need some repenting in this church. So he wants to get drafted into the greatest football team of all time.

Can they just decide that they are on the Green Bay Packers? No. They cannot do that. They can't make themselves a member of the Green Bay Packers.

[28 : 25] They need to be chosen. Right? And then they get recognized. That after I become signed as a Green Bay Packer. Then I get to put on the team jersey of the Green Bay Packers.

And everyone else on the team recognizes he's one of us. He is a part of this team. So there is a sense in which baptism is almost like putting on the team jersey.

Because you are on team Jesus now. Okay? You are with us. So who gets to put on the team Jesus jersey?

This is our third question. Question number three. Who do we baptize? If it's not clear from what we just discussed.

We only baptize those who have put their faith in Christ. Every single person being baptized today. They have clearly indicated to us that they have put their trust in Jesus.

[29 : 30] For the forgiveness of their sins. They've actually gone through. We've got a four or five page baptism study. It takes them through a lot of the major passages on baptism. We've asked them to write out their understanding based on God's word of what baptism is.

We've asked them about their testimony. We've asked them to write out what it means to be saved. So we've sat down and we've talked to each person who is going to be baptized.

The point being that we have great confidence that each person going out into Lake Michigan and getting baptized this afternoon is a new creation in Christ.

Glory to God. Amen? Now the reason that we take them through that process is because we believe that we are called to only baptize believers in Jesus Christ.

That we as a church, Christ the King Church, we are given the authority by Jesus to baptize only those who have clearly put their faith in Him. Okay?

[30 : 32] So what that means, just to get really clear and maybe put myself in a bit of hot water, no pun intended, is that we don't baptize babies at Christ the King Church.

There are many Christian traditions that do, including some traditions that we actually have a lot of affection for and that we love. But that's not something that we practice at Christ the King.

And part of the reason for that, in addition to what we've talked about, is the pattern that we see in the book of Acts. So for those that went through the baptism study, they're going to recognize some of these verses.

Here's some examples. Acts 241. I mentioned it before. This is in response to Peter's sermon at Pentecost, and I'll quote from the ESV this time. So those who received His Word, those who received the Word that Peter preached, were baptized.

And there were added that day about 3,000 souls. So those who received or believed in the gospel, they were the ones who got baptized that day.

[31 : 43] They were the ones who believed and responded with baptism. We can go to Acts 8.12 in response to Philip's preaching of the gospel in Samaria, which says this, But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and in the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

So again, this is our pattern. He preaches, they believe, and then they respond by being baptized. And the last one, I'm going through these quick. Acts 10.47, which says, Then Peter declared, Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?

And He commanded them to be baptized. So the pattern that we see in the book of Acts is baptism as an obedient response to an inward belief.

It's an obedient response to an inward belief. So again, baptism itself does not create saving faith. And even if you come from a tradition that maybe practiced infant baptism while making it clear that baptism doesn't save, which is good, it's still taking the sign that is intended for those who are new creations.

[33 : 06] And this is why we do child dedications at Christ the King and not infant baptisms. So we want to save the sign of baptism for believers. That's what I'm getting at here. We want to save the

sign of baptism for believers.

All right. So just to remind you of where we are as we go through these questions, why do we baptize? Because Jesus modeled it and commanded it. What is baptism?

It's where faith goes public. Who do we baptize? We baptize believers in Jesus. And then last question, when do we baptize?

And I'm going to say that ideally it is soon after conversion, soon after someone puts their faith in Jesus Christ. And that's because baptism is supposed to be the first public act of a Christian. So in some of those passages that you heard in Acts, the sense that we get is that baptism immediately follows after belief.

[34 : 13] Okay? So we could go to some other passages. You don't have to go there. But in Acts 16, 32 through 33, this is the case with the Philippian jailer. It says, And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. And he was baptized at once. Okay? So it's this immediate thing. Or we could go to the case of the Ethiopian eunuch who, upon hearing the gospel and believing in Acts 8, he says to Peter, See, here is water.

What prevents me from being baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stop. And they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. So, again, instantaneous, right? Now, I want to clarify something.

Because this doesn't mean that if we're down there and a random person sees us baptizing and goes, Hey, I want to be baptized too. That looks great. That we're automatically going to baptize them.

And that's because we as a church still have a responsibility from the Lord to make sure that anybody that we're baptizing is making what we would call a credible profession of faith.

[35 : 28] And that just means that it's our responsibility to make sure that everyone who's baptized, that they understand their sin, that they are a sinner, that they understand their need for a Savior, that they understand who Jesus is.

There are some important things that we need them to understand before they get baptized. And this is why when we're doing baptisms, we have people go through that baptism study because it brings clarity to what people are believing.

Are they really putting their faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins? It helps clarify some of that. One other thing.

Oh, sorry. So then once we have that clarity, I jumped ahead. Once we have that clarity, then it's time for them to put on the Team Jesus jersey. Okay? So if you're a believer in Jesus Christ this morning and you have not yet been baptized, I'm going to encourage you to come talk to me, come talk to Mike, come talk to one of our elders, and let us know so we can plan to talk to you about baptism.

We'd love to take you through that study. That would be an absolute joy for us. If you're unsure if you should be baptized, we'd love to just help you work through that.

[36 : 54] Okay? And then one last thing that I'm going to say on this point is that if you are a believer in Christ, baptized, and for a long time, maybe it was years, maybe it was decades, and you just, you waited a while to get baptized, I want you to be assured of this, that when you did get baptized, that your obedience absolutely pleased and honored the Lord.

Okay? So I'm arguing for getting baptized soon after profession of faith, but if you waited and got baptized later, I want you to know that that honored and pleased the Lord.

Okay? And now you have an awesome opportunity to tell others, don't wait. Do it now. Get baptized. Honor the Lord. So last time, here are our questions that we've gone through this morning.

Why do we baptize? Because Jesus modeled it and commanded it. What is baptism? It's where faith goes public.

Who do we baptize? We baptize believers in Jesus Christ. And when do we baptize? Ideally, it's soon after someone puts their faith in Christ.

[38 : 13] Christ. And most important to all of this is the reality that we worship a God who is still saving sinners.

That He is still raising dead souls to new life. That He is still adding to His church. That we worship, Christ the King Church, we worship a God who is still active and alive and at work.

So let's gather this afternoon down at Lake Michigan at Eichelman Park. And let's celebrate with these believers who are God in His grace and His kindness and His mercy has rescued. And they are now united to Jesus Christ. Let's celebrate that this afternoon. Would you pray with me? Heavenly Father, thank you for saving these brothers and sisters who are being baptized today.

What an incredible work that you have done in them. Uniting them with Christ. Causing them to be born again. Like we're going to sing, at your touch, our sleeping spirits were awakened.

[39 : 34] On the darkest heart, the light of Christ has shown. Caught into a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Heaven's citizens by grace and grace alone.

We as a church are so grateful to you, Lord God, for rescuing us. Would you help us to grow in faithfulness in proclaiming this good news?

Would the baptisms that we're going to observe this afternoon, would they be a public testimony to your saving grace? That your name would be magnified down at that beach this afternoon?

You are so good, Lord God. We love you. It's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.