

What Is Baptism?

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[0:00] Well, this morning, as you can see by this horse trough, also known as a baptismal, we have a baptismal service.

We are baptizing three Christian women, three sisters in the Lord, Annalyn Faminas, where is she? There she is.

Barb Pierce, where is she? There she is. And Sandra Portillo, each has clearly expressed their faith in Jesus Christ.

Each has worked through a Bible study on baptism. I had the privilege of sitting in an interview with each of them to hear about their clear profession of faith, their eagerness to follow the Lord Jesus in baptism.

And so we have those steps just to make sure these people are genuinely converted to Christ. But I'm aware that there are people in the room who may not know what baptism is or what it means.

[1:07] So this morning, here's what I'd like you to do. I'd like to immerse you in what the Bible teaches about baptism. I'd like to submerge you into God's thoughts on baptism.

I'd like to dunk you into four truths of what the Bible has to say about baptism. And in so doing, I think it will help explain why these three women are being baptized today and why, if you're a Christian and have yet to be baptized, why you should be baptized too.

So we're going to look at four biblical truths about baptism. The precedent of baptism, the command to be baptized, the symbol of baptism, and the PSA of baptism.

So the precedent of baptism. In Matthew chapter 3, verses 13 through 17, we see the ultimate precedent in terms of baptism.

Jesus himself was baptized. What we're going to see throughout the New Testament is a normative pattern of being baptized, and it starts with Jesus.

[2:21] And so if you'd open up your Bibles to Matthew chapter 3, if you have a pew Bible in front of you, it's on page 961. And Jesus has gone to the Jordan River, and he's gone to who we call JTB, John the Baptist.

And he's asked John the Baptist to baptize him. John the Baptist is a bit reluctant, and then Jesus finally convinced him. In verse 15, he says, Let it be so, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

So let's just be clear about something. John the Baptist was baptizing with what's called a baptism of repentance, of turning from your sin and turning to God. Jesus did not need a baptism of repentance, because he was without sin.

And so what Jesus is doing here is he's modeling something for us. John the Baptist, he says, Okay. And then Jesus is baptized.

He goes down into the Jordan, and John the Baptist pulls him up out of the Jordan, and when he comes up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descends upon him as a dove. And the Father, in a loud voice, says this, This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

[3:41] Verse 17. And so what we have here in the baptism of Jesus is the beginning of a precedent for Christians. Jesus is the ultimate example.

Did you guys notice? The baptism of Jesus is a triune event. You have the Son being baptized. You have the Spirit descending upon him.

And you have the Father saying, This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. It's beautiful. It pleases God. Jesus himself was baptized.

And so these three women today are going to follow Jesus in baptism. They're going to be baptized as their Savior and Lord was baptized.

But there's another precedent from the book of Acts. If you're not familiar with the book of Acts, A-C-T-S, it's a New Testament, and it is the authorized history of the early church, the start of the early church, and the spread of the early church.

[4:54] And the early church spread as the gospel of Jesus Christ was proclaimed. All around the Mediterranean basin in that first century, there were people speaking of Jesus, of who Jesus was, God in the flesh, and what he's done.

He's died on the cross for sinners. And as the gospel of Jesus is being proclaimed, there are people from all different walks of life who come to believe in this Jesus.

And then they're baptized. So what we see in the book of Acts is a pattern. Christ is proclaimed. People believe. They repent of their sins and trust in Christ.

And then they're baptized. Let me show you three examples. The first example is in Acts chapter 8. There's this guy named Philip. He's called an evangelist, which means he preaches Christ a lot. He ends up in a town. This is Acts 8, 12 through 13. He's in Samaria. And a number of men and women believe who are Samaritans, which was just extraordinary.

[6:02] And then they were baptized. So there's the pattern. There's the precedent. Very simple. Christ is proclaimed. People believe. And then they're baptized.

They're not baptized and then believe. They believe and then they're baptized. Acts 16. Paul and Silas, well, they're in chains in a Philippian jail cell.

God sends an earthquake, throws open the jail cell doors. It unshackles them. The Philippian jailer runs out. He's about to kill himself because he's thinking, all of my prisoners have now escaped. And Paul says, don't harm yourself. Do you remember what the Philippian jailer said? He said, what must I do to be saved? And then Paul and Silas explain to him, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Paul and Silas goes to the jailer's home, share that same gospel with the jailer and his household, and all of the household believes in what Paul and Silas are proclaiming about Jesus, that he's Lord.

[7:24] So there it is again. You have Christ proclaimed and you have people believe and then the whole household was baptized all at once, the scriptures say. So you see the pattern.

Christ proclaimed, people believe, and then they're baptized. There's another example. And it's the example from Acts 18.

Paul and Silas are now in Corinth. And in verse 8, they are testifying that the Christ was Jesus, that the Messiah that the Jews have been waiting for is Jesus.

And there's a man named Crispus who is the synagogue ruler in Corinth. Well, he comes to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord, the Christ.

And Crispus, with many other Corinthians, believe and they were baptized. So Christ is proclaimed, a number of people believe, and then they're baptized.

[8:35] So what we have in the New Testament is a precedent. The book of Acts shows us a normative pattern, Christ proclaimed, people believe, and then they're baptized.

baptized. So if I can just take a step back, now what we've looked at is this. Jesus is the ultimate example of baptism. He himself was baptized.

And then we see this as the gospel goes out, people believe, and then they too are baptized. And might I add just this?

In Acts 8, where Paul is baptizing, or Philip is preaching and baptizing in Samaria, later, that same account, Philip preaches the gospel to this Ethiopian eunuch.

And the Ethiopian eunuch, having believed, points to some water and says, hey, baptize me. And he went into the water and came out.

[9:41] Both in Jesus' example and in the Ethiopian eunuch's example, it's a baptism of immersion. Going all the way under the water and coming back out.

And the significance we'll get to in a second. But what I just want you to show, it's biblically precedented. Now moving from the precedent of baptism, I want to point you to the command to be

baptized.

This is point two. And if you turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 28, in verses 18 through 20, here's what's going on. If you've never heard of the word gospel before, when it comes to the books of the Bible, a gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, it's a biography of Jesus.

It's kind of the historical account of his birth, life, death, and resurrection. And by the time we get to Matthew chapter 28, Jesus has been raised from the dead.

And now he is appearing to his disciples. And in Matthew 28, 18 through 20, he's back in Galilee where his ministry started. He says this to his disciples.

[10:55] He says in verse 18, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. And that's Jesus making a huge claim that he's like, I am the king of heaven and earth. I'm lord of it all.

This is the risen Christ making that claim. And then he goes on to say, go therefore and make disciples of all nations. So he's commanding, commissioning his disciples to go make more disciples of Jesus that they would hear Christ proclaimed and believe.

And having believed, they would need to be baptized. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Again, it's another Trinitarian moment.

One name, three persons. They're to teach them to observe all that Jesus commands because he's the king.

He's Aslan on the move. And so what I just want to help you see here at the end of the Gospel of Matthew is that the risen King Jesus requiring baptism of all who become his disciples, of all who hear the Gospel of Jesus and believe in Jesus, they are then to be baptized in the name of Jesus.

[12:12] It's a way of going public for Jesus. Now I need to make a quick clarification here. Baptism is a command.

But it's not a command that saves you. In order to be saved, you need to trust in Jesus. Jesus saves you. Baptism doesn't save you.

So, baptism is a command, but it doesn't save you. No, those who are saved by Jesus, they're commanded to be baptized.

And so these three women that we're going to see baptized today, they've already believed in Jesus. And now they're just following Jesus' command and taking the step of baptism and going public with their conversion to Christ.

You might know Ephesians 2, 8, 9, for by grace you've been saved through faith. It's not of yourself, it's a gift of God, not by works so that no one should boast.

[13:15] Baptism isn't a work we do to save us. Baptism, it's a declaration of the work Christ has done to save us. In Acts 2, just to help you understand this command of baptism a little bit more, the apostle Peter is preaching one of the greatest sermons ever preached and he's in Jerusalem and he's preaching to thousands of Jewish people in Jerusalem and he brings this sermon to a head.

He's been preaching Jesus is the Lord and there are these thousands of Jewish people who then ask in verse 37, what do we do?

What do we do now in light of Jesus being the Christ? And Peter says, repent and be baptized every one of you.

And that word repent simply means to turn from your sins, from trusting yourself to save yourself, and trust in Christ. It's shorthand to be converted, to trust in Jesus, and then to be baptized.

And in verse 41, we see that those who received his word, those who believed what he proclaimed about Jesus, they are then baptized.

[14:38] Peter doesn't make baptism optional. It's a necessary step for those who believe in Jesus as their Savior and Lord. It's a command. It doesn't save you, but it's a command.

So here's what that means. For us as a church, it means this. We must be baptizing those men and women, boys and girls, who become Christians, who believe.

We are to baptize them. That's why we're having a baptism, to baptize those who believe in Jesus.

But it also means this, that those who come to faith in Christ, who repent of their sin and turn to Christ, you need to be baptized.

This command applies to you. You need to take this step to go public with Jesus. It's a command. It doesn't save you, but it's a way that we obey and follow Jesus.

Now you might be asking this question, baptism, baptism, baptism, what's the big deal with baptism? Well, it's what it represents.

[15:47] It's what it symbolizes, which brings me to the third point, third biblical truth, the symbol of baptism. And I want to bring you to Romans chapter 6, verses 1 through 5, and I'm going to read that for us.

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? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Did you hear the baptism language? 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 newness of life.

The Apostle Paul is using baptism as a way of kind of a visible demonstration of our invisible union with Christ. He's talking about using baptism in a way of, hey, your baptism actually is the visible kind of seeing of something that God has done within you.

It's called being united to Christ. I've been preaching on Sunday mornings through the book of Colossians, and I've been loving every minute of it.

[17:11] And you can sum up the point of the whole book of Colossians in two words. Christ central. Jesus Christ is the controlling center of our lives as Christians.

He's the treasured center of our lives as Christians. He's the life-giving center of our lives as Christians. He is the glorious center of our lives.

As Christians, our lives orbit him. He doesn't orbit us. When a sinner, a person who's been sinning their whole life, believes in Jesus Christ for the first time, at that moment, they've been converted.

The Bible talks about it as being made new, as becoming a new creation. From Colossians, we've learned that when someone believes, they are delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the beloved son.

They have a new kingdom. They have a new king, Jesus. And we've been learning from Colossians as well, as we see here in Romans 6, 1 through 5, they're given a new identity in Christ.

[18:29] That they're united to Christ in his death and resurrection. Remember in Colossians 2, that we die with Christ and in 3, 1, that we are raised with Christ.

This union with Christ is absolutely phenomenal. It makes you a whole new creation. And so here's what that means.

When someone believes in Jesus for the first time, God unites them to Christ's death. And so therefore, that sinner's sin is completely forgiven and sin is no longer their master.

And they're also raised with Christ. And so now, they're given new life so that they can live for God. You've been united with Christ in his death and resurrection.

And that's why this is so important. You might see a horse trough. What you need to be seeing is a symbol of Jesus' death.

[19:38] So Anna Lynn's going to be the first to be baptized. And so she's going to come up here. I'm going to introduce you to her. And then Eric and I are going to put her in the water. And you're going to hear me say to her as she's going down into the water, united with Christ in his death.

And that'll hold her for three minutes. We'll sing a song. Just to make the point. And then we'll pull her out of the water and you'll hear me say, and raised with Christ to newness of life.

So here's what the water represents, the death of Jesus. United with Christ in his death, raised with Christ to newness of life. So you know what this baptism symbolizes.

An individual's union with Christ. It's a statement about their conversion. All three of these women are saying this this morning.

I've come to believe who Jesus is. I have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection. I am a new creation. Three times this morning. It's a huge statement.

[20:53] I've been saved from my sins because I've been united to Christ. That's the big deal about baptism. It's what it signifies.

It's an outward expression of an inward change that has been brought about by God himself in each of these women's lives. And that's what they're announcing.

Which brings me to the fourth point. The PSA of baptism. It's the fourth biblical truth. You know what a PSA is, don't you?

Public service announcement. Years ago when people actually watched the Tennessean news on TV, there was a Milwaukee TV station, a news station that would make this PSA at 10 p.m.

It's 10 p.m., parents. Do you know where your children are at? It is just kind of raising awareness, making something known.

[22:01] That's the point of a public service announcement. baptism is a biblical public service announcement.

Let me ground it not just in its precedent and command and its symbolism, but let me just ground it in Matthew 10 as an outworking of this.

Listen to what Jesus says. Jesus is talking to his apostles about not fearing man, not being afraid of what other people think about you. And he says this, fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows.

In verse 32 he says, so everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

And at a minimum, Jesus is saying something quite extraordinary. He's making it very clear that those who follow him are not to be ashamed of him, but must be willing to go public for him, to publicly identify with him.

[23:18] And what baptism is, is a beautiful, commanded way to go public for Jesus, to acknowledge Jesus before men.

So when each of these women are baptized, do you know what they're saying? What Jesus thinks matters more than what anybody in the room thinks.

That's what they're saying. They're saying, Jesus is my treasure. And they're going public for him.

They're acknowledging him before this company of men and women.

Now you can ask the question, well, who then is a PSA for? This thing called baptism. Well, for sure, it's for these three sisters being baptized. It's for them. It's for them to go public.

For them to make an announcement by way of their baptism that they belong to Jesus. And it's not something they're going to forget anytime soon.

[24:26] But it's also for everyone in the room, this public service announcement. If you're not a Christian in the room, when you see these three women baptized, there could be a two-fold kind of effect.

First one is this. It's a delineation. You're thinking, oh, Sandra, oh, she's now a Jesus person. And she's one of them.

She's no longer one of us. She's one of them. That's what baptism does. It's a delineation. It helps people understand that this person being baptized, it's a PSA.

Hey, I am living for Jesus now. So a non-Christian hears that and like, okay, sounds good. The second effect is this. When a non-Christian sees someone baptized, to be asking this question, and if you're a non-Christian in the room, I hope you're asking this question when you see these three women baptized.

Why would someone ever do something like that? What is it about this Jesus that would cause these women to take that step?

[25:49] And it's got everything to do with who Jesus is and what he's done. And so if you're a non-Christian in the room, be asking the question, why would they do this?

Who is this Jesus? There's another group of people in the room, the Christians in the room. This PSA is for you.

And again, it's a delineating effect. It's when you see Anna Lynn or Barb or Sandra going into the water and coming out, you're like, oh, they're no longer one of them.

They're one of us. They live for Jesus now. And so we get to be able to recognize that these three women have been brought into the kingdom of God, part of the family of faith.

That's why we're having cake downstairs afterwards. We're celebrating their step of obedience. But it also has this effect. Last two sermons, I've been talking about this thing called Christocentric resonance.

[26:56] Here's the illustration I've been using. Imagine on the stage, two baby grand pianos, each just perfectly tuned. Someone comes up and hits center C on one baby grand.

Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. Do you know what's going to happen in the other? Center C will hum because it's on the same frequency. And so here's going to be some Christocentric resonance, brothers and sisters.

When these three women go in and are baptized, it's like they're hitting Christ central in the room. Jesus is everything to them.

And let that resonate in your being. And let what comes up be thankfulness to God. A yes and amen.

So it's very appropriate for one, each of these women are going to go down and come up to say glory to God. Yes and amen. All praise to his name.

[27:58] It's the edifying effect of a baptism, of a PSA among God's people. So this baptism, well, it's a biblical PSA.

It's like each of these people are saying, hey, it's 11 a.m. Sunday morning. do you know who my Savior and Lord is? Jesus.

What is baptism? Well, it's a biblical precedent. We've seen that. Jesus is the greatest example. We've seen it throughout Acts. Christ proclaimed, people believe, then are baptized. It's a biblical command.

Jesus himself commands it by virtue of saying, go baptize those whom you are making disciples. it's a biblical picture of our union with Christ.

It is beautiful. And it's a biblical public service announcement that these three women are saying, hey, I'm going to acknowledge my Jesus before this company of men.

[29:08] So if you're a Christian, a non-Christian in the room, a non-Christian in the room, let me ask you just very, very lovingly but clearly, what do you need to know in order to become a follower of Jesus yourself?

What do you need to know in order to turn from your sin and turn to Christ? What else do you need to know? What is keeping you from becoming a follower of Jesus today?

I'd be happy to talk to you about that after the service. If you're a parent of children who are expressing interest in baptism, this is the second group of people, if your kids are expressing interest in baptism, I would encourage you as your pastor to err on the side of waiting.

Here's why. So that your children fully understand what baptism means. They're going to be eager. They want to please. We've got a lot of compliant kids that want to just do it because they know it's good.

But you want to be sure as their parents that they understand why. So here's what you're listening for. I would say this is what you're listening for for both baptism and the Lord's Supper.

[30:28] It's listening for your child's understanding of their own sinfulness. Does your child know that when they do wrong, it's ultimately against God.

It's a Godward repentance. It's a Godward grief. And I would encourage you to wait until you're hearing that in your child. That they understand more and more that their sin not only hurts other people, but it grieves the God who created them.

that will help them understand both the significance of the Lord's Supper and baptism. Third group of people.

If you're a Christian in the room and you have not been baptized yet, here's what you need to put on your calendar. Sunday, August 11th. It's our church picnic.

We're down at Eichelman and we use this really cool baptismal called Lake Michigan. And when I say really cool, I'm literally like really cool.

[31:38] But you want to get that on your calendar. In that vestibule on the Connect desk, there are Bible studies on baptism. If you want to be baptized on the 11th, grab one of those.

And then you're going to want to get a hold of Kelly Schneeberger. Kelly, are you in the room? Here she is down front. She's the coordinator. So if you want to be baptized, you're going to want to talk to her and she'll set up a time we get together and then make sure you're ready to be baptized. So if you're not a Christian and you want to be baptized, Sunday, August 11th, which now brings me to the fourth group of people, Anna Lynn, Barb, and Sandra, let's apply this biblical teaching on baptism.

Let me pray and then we'll have Anna Lynn come up. God, we're so thankful for what your word has to say about baptism.

You don't leave us guessing. It's very clear. And God, we want to thank you for what you've begun in these three women. And thank you for this step that they're taking in terms of going public with their union with Christ, their conversion.

[32:49] God, would you impress this upon their memories for the rest of their days? Would you help them use this to communicate your goodness to them? And God, would you bring about a Christocentric resonance in the room?

Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.