

Selected Verses “Meeting Jesus in Baptism”

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 July 2024

Preacher: Will Spink

- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- I'd love to invite the kids to come join me up here for just a minute on the stairs. I want to talk with you all about baptism. And as they're coming, I want to clarify something that Kathy said.
- The ice cream tonight will not be live streamed. You will need to come in person for the ice cream portion of the evening.
- So I hope you all come back tonight for ice cream, okay? All right, come up. Yeah, just sit down where you can. I'll show you what I've got. Have any of you ever needed to take a bath to get clean?
- Can you? Yeah, some of you. More of you. Everybody? Okay. Everybody's taken a bath before. Maybe have you gotten dirty playing outside before? Yeah?
- [1 : 0 2] And you needed to wash it off. Well, look what happened to my baby doll. My baby doll got kind of dirty too, you know? So she really needs a bath, don't you think?
- We should give her a bath. What do we need? What do we need for? Water? Water? Water. Water. Water. Oh, I don't have any water.
- Where would I get? Did anybody see baby Nora get baptized this morning? Yeah? Did you see that? Let me see what's over here. Will you hold this for a second for me? Thanks. Thanks. Thanks.
- Let's see. Huh. Did y'all know what's in here? Yeah. What's in here? There's water in here.
- Isn't that a good idea? So look what we can do with it. We can use this water. Isn't that great? We can get this baby doll clean. Is that enough water you think?
- [2 : 0 1] Yes. Yep. Take it. Look at it. The dirt just comes off, doesn't it? I'll show you in just a second. Got to clean her up. Did y'all see when baby Nora got baptized?
- Did we pour water on her from out of here? Yes. Is that what it was? Did y'all know that's what was in this bucket that goes up there? No. Yeah. It's water that we use when we baptize.
- What do you think we use water for? What does water do? It cleans things. Let's put that down for just a second. Yeah. It washes and makes us clean, doesn't it?
- Look. Is the baby doll cleaner now where the water washed dirt away? I haven't quite finished the bath, but she's getting a lot cleaner, isn't she? But see, when baby Nora came up for the baptism, she wasn't dirty on the outside, was she?
- She was all dressed up nice and clean. And so, what's going on in baptism? Why do we use water in baptism, do you think?
- [3 : 0 2] Inside, right? Because we have dirt inside of us, and who's the only person who can wash that dirt and make it clean?

God. God is. Jesus is. And see, here's what's happening in baptism. Some of you have been baptized, haven't you? Some of you were baptized so long ago, you can't even remember when you were baptized.

And others of you, you can remember when water was put on you. You know what God was wanting you to know when that water was on you, just like it went on Nora this morning?

God. He wanted you to know how much he loves you and how you can get your sin, the dirt inside you, washed away so that you'll be clean. What's the only place we can go for that?

God. Going to God for that. Because God knew that you would be dirty. That you would make mistakes. That you would need forgiveness.

[4 : 02] And so God wanted you to know, even when you were a little baby like Nora, where you would go to get clean. Where's that? To Jesus. That you would come to Jesus whenever you were dirty and needed to be cleaned.

You could come to him and that he would wash your sin away forever. Isn't that awesome? That he would make you completely clean. So when y'all see baptism and when you see water washing over somebody, an adult or a baby, will you remember that Jesus washes you from all your sins to make you clean forever?

Isn't that awesome? Let me pray for you and then I'll let you go back. Jesus, we thank you that you love us and that you have given your blood to wash us and make us clean.

We pray that you would help us to remember that. Help us to know how much you love us. That every one of these little kids, whenever they sin, would know they have a savior who loves and forgives them.

And we thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you all for coming up here this morning. You can go back now. We've been talking this summer about what it looks like for us to live in relationship with God.

[5 : 32] Walking with Jesus. We're going to bless the pathways in which he meets us with his grace, which is what we need every moment of every day to be breathing in like oxygen.

And these first four weeks of the summer, we've talked about the Bible and prayer and we've been talking mostly about our personal relationship with God. And that's great because God relates with us personally, doesn't he?

One on one. But sometimes that's all we picture when we think about walking with Jesus. It's just me and Jesus in the forest, in life.

It's just the two of us. That's all it is. But think about Jesus when he walked on the earth. When he wasn't alone with his father, Jesus was often with groups of people, wasn't he?

A community of followers, men and women walking with him. When you picture yourself walking with Jesus, it should not be isolated.

[6 : 37] It should not be a lonely endeavor. In fact, when you do personally meet with God, you can count on the fact that he will send you into community to experience his grace and to express it to others in an ongoing way.

He wants that to be how you walk with him. I experienced this a couple years ago when I had a sabbatical. And during that time, a very renewing time in my relationship with God, most of it spent by myself with him during that time.

But the continuing of that daily relationship with him has been right back in relationship with my family here at Southwood, with grace groups and friends, young and old, a part of this family.

Jesus meets us personally, but he also meets us corporately with his grace, doesn't he? That's part of why when we talk about the means of grace, the pathways that God brings his grace into our lives, we talk about the word and especially the preaching of his word among his people.

We talk about prayer and especially praying together. And then the sacraments which are given to the church, to God's gathered people.

[8 : 07] And we're going to talk about baptism today and the Lord's Supper next week. And both of those are representative of the grace of the gathered worship and life of God's covenant community, his people together.

How does he bring his grace to us together? Making the gathered worship of God's people a regular part of your life is a great way to meet Jesus and walk with him regularly.

It's the way he designed it. It's not just when we come here on a Sunday morning that we praise him as important and wonderful as that is, but we teach and admonish one another as we sing, Colossians says.

We humble ourselves together before him as we pray, Jesus tells us. We learn the full dimensions of Jesus' love for us, which is so important that we understand.

We learn that together with all the saints, Ephesians explains. And within that weekly covenant renewal of God's people, two particular gifts to be used often are the sacraments.

[9 : 21] As Augustine said, they are visible signs of an invisible grace, grace we desperately need, right? They are one way God gives his grace to strengthen our faith.

So we're going to look at several different passages that help us understand how God does this in baptism, but let's pray together first. God, we long to know you more.

We desperately need your grace. And so would you show it to us this morning? Would you meet us here by your spirit, through your word, and change us and remind us that you're with us and comfort us with your presence?

We ask in Jesus' name, amen. Amen. I've realized this week how many people expect baptism sermons to be controversial, you know, focused on the amount of water used and the age of the person being baptized.

And for those of you feeling that anxiety right now, I want to let you breathe. I am not addressing that at all. Either one of those. Of course, there are some distinctions among brothers and sisters in Christ, but the heart of what we're talking about this morning is true no matter how much water you use.

[10 : 52] There's some spilled up here this morning. No matter how old you are when it is being used or said differently, no matter when you were baptized or whether you've ever been baptized, baptized, this is for you.

And you can meet Jesus and experience God's grace here. Let's make sure we're on the same page about what baptism means before we talk about how it is a means of grace to us.

Jesus tells his followers as they go that they're to make disciples of all nations and that they are to be baptizing these disciples, right?

It is the new covenant sign of entrance into God's family. So why wash someone with water? I could have picked a lot of different signs.

Why do that? What's being communicated when we do that? Well, the significance of signs is always focused on what God is doing. That's why these are means of his grace to us.

[12 : 01] It's not us doing something for him. It's God giving his grace to us, reminding us of his promises. And at least three key things that the Bible highlights God is promising in baptism as our faith meets his faithfulness.

Isn't that a wonderful thing? As our faith meets God's faithfulness. What's happening? First, God promises to forgive our sins.

This is the part I talked about with the kids, right? What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Acts chapter 2.

Repent and be baptized. Every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins.

And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 22. Rise. Be baptized. Wash away your sins, calling on his name.

[13 : 09] All sins, past, present, and future, forgiven in his name. Because in baptism, God promises to unite us to Jesus.

Galatians chapter 3. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Put on Christ is the language of union with Christ.

It's the essence of our relationship to him. That I am so connected to him. That what God sees of him, he sees of me. What happens to Jesus happens to me.

That's the promise of God that is explained by Paul in Romans 6. Baptism is a picture of this, Paul says. Look at verse 3.

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.

[14 : 18] 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. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Do you hear? Death like Jesus. Life like Jesus in baptism. He goes on, verse 8. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Verse 11. And so you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. A fundamentally new identity that God is working out.

There's a new reality. He's putting to death the old man because you died with Christ. And he's bringing to life the new man because you were raised with Christ.

Christ. You're with him in Christ Jesus forever. It's a union that can never be broken. This is an essential joy of union with Christ.

[15 : 34] Because think about it. How does washing you in baptism make you clean forever? Won't you sin again? Yes. But what about that water?

It's just gone. It's washed away. It's down the drain. What will I do? I've sinned again. No, no. This is the difference. In the blood of Jesus, you are united to Jesus.

You have put him on. So you stay connected to him forever. It's even better than a water bath. The blood of Jesus saves forever.

That's what being united to him means. And finally, God promises then to raise us to new life. That life that we're just reading about in Romans 6.

Because we're united to the Savior who walks out of the grave, doesn't he? By the power of the Spirit. So God gives us the same Spirit. That same resurrection life and power.

[16 : 33] Colossians 2 says it this way about baptism. As it replaces the sign of the covenant in the old covenant, which was circumcision. Paul is explaining to us now what happens in baptism.

In him, in Christ, also you were circumcised with a... There's a difference. A circumcision made without hands. By putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism.

In which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead. How did it happen in our lives?

And you who were dead in your trespasses, in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Jesus, having forgiven us all our trespasses.

By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. Do you see as he explains the connection with baptism, all three of these themes coming together in one section here?

[17 : 42] Raised by the power of God because you're with Christ. So you've been set free from sin and God has poured out his Holy Spirit on you for the rest of your days.

The water of baptism says we're free. We're connected. We're empowered. And nothing can reverse those realities that are ours by faith in Christ.

These are the promises pictured in baptism according to God's word. And if you read some of these passages about baptism, the language is really strong, isn't it?

It can make you think they're just automatically happen. How does baptism bring God's grace into my life? Seems obvious. Just get some of that holy water on someone.

Just hit them with it and he'll be forgiven. He'll be united to Jesus. He'll be raised to new life instantly. Some people say. But other people say, whoa, whoa, whoa, not so fast.

[18 : 47] Don't forget it's just a sign. It's not the hospital. It's not the chicken sandwich. Don't talk baptism up too much.

It's really no big deal. It doesn't bring God's grace into your life. It just points you to God's offer of grace. Take it or leave it. Either way, it doesn't matter. That seems to downplay the significance of many of the passages that we just read.

It misses God's clear command to those who believe to be baptized. I want to suggest that neither of those two extremes is faithful to the whole of the Bible.

I want to suggest to you that when we participate in a baptism, we are doing something that is neither magical nor meaningless.

Neither magical nor meaningless. Like a wedding ring. Some of you have one of these. You can fiddle with it if you'd like to. I've been wearing this one for 20 years this week, which I've been thinking a lot about wedding rings.

[19 : 57] I'm very thankful to have had the privilege of wearing one for 20 years. So I've learned a little bit about what they mean and what a wedding ring does. When you attend a wedding, the rings don't magically make the bride and groom married, do they?

They take vows before God. That's necessary. They assign a marriage license for human legal requirements and bam!

Husband and wife. Rings or not, even if you were to forget the ring, they're married. If you lose the ring at the bottom of the ocean on the honeymoon, do you stop being married?

No. Certainly not. I sure hope not. Similarly, when I gave Christy a ring nine months before our wedding with no vows, no license, the ring didn't magically make us married, did it?

It was an engagement ring. Rings don't magically make you married. Does that mean they're meaningless then?

[21 : 10] Just, you know, why bother? Well, they're not worthless. I can tell you that from pain for one. But also, think about it.

This ring is a picture of God's unending love, isn't it? It's a picture from the one who gave it to me of Christy promising that kind of love to me, that I promised that kind of love to her.

A ring is a picture of being engaged to be married, right? Marked out to belong to another, each of us to the other. And then it becomes a picture of being truly married.

But even more than a picture, it does something else powerful. It communicates to me the benefits of God's love. I can feel it and remember it.

Of Christy's love. Of my being faithful to the vows that I made before God to her. Further, it communicates to others that I'm hers.

[22 : 22] Not that this is a major point of confusion or consternation to many women. But I'm taken. It says that. It communicates to the world and to my heart.

It's a commitment that I made 20 years ago to a relationship designed never to end. I don't have other relationships like that. It is an amazing relationship.

When I consider that relationship, it's powerful. When I consider that commitment, it's powerful. When I consider that unending love that would belong to someone who loves like that, it's powerful.

It's powerful. This ring is almost a part of my body. I have to work really hard to get it off. I feel it.

I see it. I feel uncomfortable without it. Listen, God has always worked this way with his people. He wants us to feel and know those things.

[23 : 25] He condescends to give us powerful signs that we can see and touch and taste. They are far from meaningless.

Think about it. God could have merely said that he would never flood the earth again. But instead, he said that and he hung this glorious rainbow up in the clouds visibly and powerfully to remind us of his faithful promise.

That does something. The blood of the Passover lamb gave life to God's people as they ate unleavened bread in faith.

God's presence was felt in the burning bush. The pillar of fire that led his people. Eventually, the tongues of fire on their heads at Pentecost so that they would know he was really here with you.

He wasn't just saying it. Jesus didn't just say to his disciples that he died and rose. He told Thomas, touch the wounds in my hands. Put your hands in my side. Taste, touch, see that the Lord is good.

[24 : 36] Touch and feel the reality of his presence with you and his promises to you. That is the gracious message of baptism. Feel the water.

Watch it wash sins away. Receive the promised spirit. Know that the God who makes these promises is real.

Baptism means something similar to all these other physical signs, doesn't it? It's powerful. It is a means, a pathway of God's grace.

A place we can truly meet the Jesus to whom we are united. By whom we are forgiven. With whom we are raised.

Now, God can bring his grace directly into your life during your baptism, can't he? If that's the way he chooses to work.

[25 : 39] But the wedding ring analogy reminds us that he can meet you there during someone else's baptism too. Did anyone here see my wedding ring and think of your own love for your spouse while I was talking about this ring?

Somebody did. Come on. Keep your hands up. Have any of you ever gone to a wedding and been encouraged in your own love and your own wedding vows by watching someone else take theirs?

Yeah, many of us know that experience, of course. See, if it's not magic water, but it is a living Savior.

A living Spirit dwelling in you. If it's a living Savior to whom you are united by faith. Not just once when the water washes over you, but forever.

If this represents the promises of a living Father who wants you to know that you are loved always and forever no matter what you do, then you can meet Jesus while Nora is getting baptized.

[26 : 46] In fact, you should and you must. We should find ourselves embracing Christ afresh every time we see a baptism.

He is coming to embrace us and we are to respond in faith, embracing him. That should happen. It shouldn't be five minutes for you to check out while something happens to somebody else.

1 Peter 3 helps us here. At first, baptism is going to sound magical in this verse. Look, baptism now saves you.

Really? Really? Is it that simple? Just hit me with some water, Will. Can I get a little bit of that from the stage this morning? How is it? How does baptism save us?

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.

[27 : 45] It saves us by pointing us to faith in a living Jesus who really does save us. He's alive for that.

He's working to do that. Baptism is not some meaningless, optional, religious right. It is the God-given means of receiving in your body and professing to the world the grace that he has promised in Jesus to save us with.

If you've never been baptized before, listen for just a minute this morning. It is not holy water that I want to introduce you to today.

Instead, a holy Savior who promises that he really will forgive all your sins to keep you safe with him, to give you new life like you've never known.

This is not my idea. God is the one telling us to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, and we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[28 : 56] That's his offer, his promise to you this morning. I'll tell you honestly, I have never met anyone who didn't need to be cleaned from something in his life. I've never met anyone who wanted to be completely alone always and forever.

I've never met anyone who was entirely content with his experience of life in this world, who didn't long for something more. And I've never met anyone beyond the reach of Jesus.

You're not. This sacrament is a reminder of that. His words to you that he will wash and cleanse you are reminders of that. He can cleanse you even if you can't believe it.

He does hold you. He will give you life abundant and eternal. Guess how much it costs? It's free. That's why we say it's grace.

It is entirely free. You just trust him today and receive that gift of his salvation. And if you will, then he says to be baptized.

[30 : 08] Baptism will remind you that the faithful God who always keeps his promises promises to save you.

When the water washes over you, you'll remember that he doesn't just make promises generically, but he makes them personally. That he doesn't leave you on your own. That he brings you into a family who stands with you and prays for you and shares life alongside you.

And he loves you so much he wants you in that family. If you have been baptized, and that's most of you in here this morning, always remember that.

Even if you can't remember it happening, I don't remember. My baptism was over 40 years ago now. Goodness. It's hard to remember.

I don't have a specific memory. But as you hear God's promises, as you see the waters of baptism, some washing over others. As you even recall or imagine, picture in your mind, the feeling of water washing over you.

[31 : 19] Consider your own life. See, this is part of God's good design for every single one of us. You receive only one baptism.

Baptism. But in covenant community, you keep being reminded, as others receive the same sign of his promises, as they become brothers and sisters that you commit to loving, in spite of you and in spite of them.

Baptism helps us experience God's grace, as we not just think about it, but we actually experience in our body, and take into our hearts the realities that it points us to.

We don't have a baptism here every Sunday, like we did today. Although, boy, it seems like a lot sometimes. Every week, you look at this font.

Every week, remember the blood of Jesus. Every week, renew your hope. There is no one else you're supposed to throw your arms around and embrace as your hope and your life.

[32 : 25] As the water signifies God's promises for us, God, by his spirit, meets us, and he works those into our lives, so that we know we're free, we're connected, we're empowered.

I really want us all to learn how to do that differently, to help us engage our hearts, as we participate in baptism and worship together as a covenant community, that we'll really meet Jesus there.

You can consider these same three biblical themes we've been talking about this morning. There are questions at this resource link we've been using all summer.

I will warn those of you who like theological controversy, the questions are only questions for your heart. They're not controversies for your head and any of these resources about your age or the amount of water being used.

Don't even look. They exist. There's plenty of them. They're not hard to find, but that's not what this is for. What do you need to be pondering as we celebrate a baptism together?

[33 : 31] You should be pondering the forgiveness of sins. What a necessary reminder of our need for cleansing. If we weren't dirty deep inside, Jesus wouldn't have had to shed his blood to make us clean.

There's a real problem. As you rejoice with others, consider if you are living forgiven and free or if you're still carrying guilt and shame that Jesus has washed away.

Those things should be on your mind. Think about your union with Christ. It is always important to ask yourself if you are walking closely with Jesus like someone who is permanently connected to him or am I drifting?

Does Jesus seem really distant? In Galatians chapter 3 that we read earlier, after Paul talks about baptism and being united to Christ, putting on Christ, he tells us one of the implications of having put on Christ in baptism is that you now are dressed like everyone else who is clothed in Christ.

You're not all dressed. I see lots of different colors out there this morning. You're not all dressed identically. But when you put on Christ, that becomes of utmost importance.

[34 : 46] He's going to challenge us. Are you honoring men and women? Are you welcoming white and black? Are you loving rich and poor?

Because you see Jesus first when you look at them. Do you celebrate your connection to Jesus and to his family by pointing your grace group and your kids and your brothers and sisters to Jesus for grace?

Finally, new resurrection life. Think about the new life you have. This life gets so discouraging and confusing at times and you're going to come in here on a Sunday morning and you're not going to know which end is up and there's going to be a baptism.

And you're going to say, I don't feel new life, pastor. I feel death. I feel hopeless. And you're going to need to feel the water again and not be distracted from what God wants you to know that you don't have to live in fear, that you don't have to protect yourself.

You can trust the God who has empowered you with his spirit. God, where am I doing that? Where am I living fearfully as though I'm on my own? Baptism is calling you back to the spirit of power and love that you have in you because he promised it.

[36 : 14] Or ask yourself where you sense God growing new life in you, bringing new life to others through you and celebrate that. There are so many ways to meet Jesus during a baptism.

I think you could spend the rest of the day considering them in your heart. Thankfully, God has given us a whole Sabbath with him. He will meet you there if you'll take the time to ponder it.

Don't miss Jesus ever. But especially in baptism, he meets us there. See, Jesus got baptized too, didn't he?

We meet Jesus in baptism because he was baptized. Yes, by John the Baptist to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus so identified with us and modeled obedience for us.

So of course, Jesus meets us in baptism. But I'm thinking primarily of another baptism. Jesus kept talking about his upcoming baptism even after being baptized by John.

[37 : 28] Mark chapter 10, Jesus said, Are you able to drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?

Luke chapter 12, Jesus says to the disciples again, I have a baptism to be baptized with and how great is my distress until it is accomplished.

It's not the one that's already happened. It's one that's coming, isn't it? Note that that fearful, distressing baptism that Jesus faces is the one that we should have faced.

That's the baptism we had coming. The one where our sins were washed with wrath because they deserved it. They deserved death.

It should have been poured out over us. Instead, Jesus drinks the cup of God's wrath due to our sins so that his blood can flow to us and we can drink instead the cup of forgiveness.

[38 : 39] In fact, we can have the cup of forgiveness wash over us fully and forever because we are his. What a gift of God's grace then is baptism because we meet in it every time.

The Savior who has walked that path of wrath so that we can walk today and forever with him in the pathway of grace.

Amen. Let's walk with him in that. Pray with me. Jesus, we celebrate your grace. We rejoice that it is a promise that is our only hope.

That you tell us there's a solution for broken, dirty, hurting, messed up, confused, weary people like us. And you have come to give it to us.

What great kindness. What great love. We give you thanks for it. We are so grateful, Jesus, to be yours and that you have given yourself so that you are ours forever.

[39 : 51] May that reality fill our hearts and change our lives today, we ask in your name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.

stars. dramatically bracelet ■■■