

Sermon Mark 1 1 11

Sermon: 1st Sunday after Epiphany – The Baptism of Our Lord

Text: Mark 1:1-11

Theme: United with Christ through the Baptism

Goal: To review and renew our Baptism, reaffirming that we are united in Christ and with Christ since then to live a new life!

Dear Friends,

Introd.: Christ identified Himself with humankind in all things. Although He didn't have sin, He took our sins over Himself and asked John to baptize Him on our behalf. John realized that Jesus didn't need to be baptized for forgiveness of sins; but Jesus answered John's argument: *"Let it be so now, it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."*

Jesus not only died for us on the cross, but He was baptized for us as well; all His life was for us; and when He rose from the death, He brought us a new life. He didn't need to do anything of all He did and suffered; it was all on our behalf, by love, because we were not able to do anything. And when we were baptized, we were united with Jesus in such a strong way that all that belonged to us was given to Jesus: our sins, our sorrows, our death; and all that belongs to Jesus was given to us: the forgiveness of sins, God's love and a new life as God's children!

The Epiphany Season shows Jesus as the One sent by God, the Anointed One. His Baptism was the beginning of His public ministry. We will talk about Baptism, based on Luther's Small Catechism, just because Baptism is the beginning of our Christian life, our eternal life. Our lives and all doctrines and truths of the Bible follow the Baptism, the Sacrament of Initiation.

I – What is Baptism?

In Matt. 28:19 Jesus says: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and

of the Holy Spirit" - This is the very ground of the Baptism. We have a *command* of God and we have His *blessing*. And, as Jesus said to John: "It is proper for us to do this", much more we need to obey Jesus' words and baptize our children. I cannot understand people who are not baptized or don't bring their children to be baptized as soon as possible! These people are despising God's blessings. - Martin Luther was baptized when he was one day old only. Later, he thanked his father, who had brought him to the Baptism so early. Luther said: *I was one day only in the hand of the devil; the day after I was put in the gracious hands of Jesus through the Baptism.* - Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14).

Luther has a very simple answer to the question: "*What is Baptism?*" He says in the Small Catechism: "Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word.

Which is that word of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19)."

II – What benefits does Baptism give?

The second question in the Catechism is, "*What benefits does Baptism give?*" Mark 16:16 says: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned". - To be saved or to be condemned; there is no other option. To be condemned is the natural way of the whole humankind. It's not necessary to do anything. - And **we** cannot do anything for our salvation; the solution is in God's hand and comes from God only. And He gives us the solution: To receive Jesus' blessings through the Means of Grace, which gives us forgiveness of sins, rescues us from the evil, and gives us eternal life. And the Baptism is one of the Means of Grace. The other two are: God's Word and the Holy Supper, which give us the same blessings.

Let us read what Luther wrote about the benefits of Baptism:

What benefits does Baptism give?

It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are these words and promises of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

III – How can water do such great things?

Many people don't believe in the power of the Baptism. Some say it is simple water and they don't baptize their children. Others say it is just a symbol, and cannot give forgiveness or every blessing. Others say that Baptism is a human decision and an external form to demonstrate our faith, and don't baptize children, just adults.

Baptism is God working!!! Not we. When we bring our children and godchildren to the Holy Baptism, and when we, as pastors, administrate the Baptism, we are just God's tools to share God's blessing with the children. Peter is clear when he writes: "Baptism now saves you... It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand!" (1 Peter 3:21-22). Peter says more: "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). God put His promise in such a simple way: Water and His Words. It's like a medicine: sometimes just a little tablet, but with great effect!

Luther explains this in his Third Chapter about Baptism:

How can water do such great things?

Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith, which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three: "He saved us through the washing of

rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying" (Titus 3:5-8).

IV – What does such baptizing with water indicate?

Finally, we come back to the Second Reading of this Sunday: Romans 6. Paul writes about a very good relationship between Christ and us through the Baptism. And that is the value of Baptism in our daily life. Baptism is not just something in the past; but our daily repentance and renewal of faith is to reaffirm our Baptism Covenant. God is faithful and will never break His covenant; and He gave us New Life in our Baptism, so that we should live this New Life in love to our neighbor. Martin Luther wrote: “

What does such baptizing with water indicate?

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

St. Paul writes in Romans chapter 6: "We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:4).

Conclusion: We praise God that we received the New Life in Christ through our Baptism and that God is still preserving the New Life in us through His Word and through the Holy Supper. Let us live faithfully this New Life in fervent love toward God and in fervent love toward our neighbor. Amen.

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