

On Baptism

Romans 6:3-11

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity, July 8, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

You are baptized into Christ.

It is a matter of concern for some members of the congregation that our Lord commanded His apostles to baptize in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and then when the apostles go out into the world and fulfill the Lord's command they record that they baptized people into Christ. Some members of the congregation have even tried to pit our Lord's command against what the apostles did as if they were two different things. You cannot do that unless you subscribe to higher critical theology. Therefore what our Lord commanded His apostles is what the apostles did. Therefore to baptize someone into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is the same thing as baptizing them into Christ.

Unless your baptism has not yet come, all of you have been baptized into Christ. You have been baptized into Christ because you were baptized into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Because you have been baptized into Christ, you have been baptized into His death. Because you have been baptized into His death, you have been buried with Christ into death.

That means two things. First of all it means that the death and burial of Christ are inseparable. They may look like two different events, but they are actually one event. If you can be baptized into one and thus automatically baptized into the other, those two seemingly separate events are actually in fact one event.

The second thing is that to be baptized into one is to be baptized into the other. As soon as you are baptized into Christ, you are baptized into His death. As soon as you are baptized into His death, you have been buried with Him through baptism into death.

In short since you have been baptized, you have died.

What is the point of being baptized into Christ and therefore into His death and therefore being buried with Him? The point is that you walk in newness of life.

Therefore the death of Christ is inseparable from His burial. And His death and burial are inseparable from His resurrection. They are all one event. They may seem like three different events, but they are all one event. Whenever Christ predicted His death, He also predicted His burial and resurrection. He never predicted His death without also predicting at least His resurrection if not His burial. Thus since Christ always spoke of them together and His Word creates all things, He has placed them together as following one another in inevitable succession. As soon as He dies, He is buried, and no sooner is He buried than He rises again.

Therefore if you have been baptized into His death, you have been buried with Him. But you cannot be buried with Him without at the same time rising again from the dead. This resurrection God calls walking in newness of life.

Therefore since you have been baptized you have newness of life. It is the newness of life that the Christ has in His resurrection. But then what does that mean?

Ok. Let us run at this thing again.

You have been baptized into Christ. Because you have been baptized into Christ, you have been baptized into His death. His death was a crucifixion. Therefore you have been crucified. In what sense have you been crucified? You have been crucified in the sense that your old man has been crucified. What does it mean to say that your old man has been crucified? It means that the body of sin has been brought to nothing. What does it mean to say that the body of sin has been brought to nothing? It means that you are no longer enslaved to the sin.

And here is precisely where our Lutheran preaching has failed you. My own preaching has failed you. At times I have left you with the impression that sin is nothing other than a specific disobedience to one of God's commands. I have explained to children in this way: sin is doing something that God does not want you to do. While sin is that, that is not all that it is. Sin is also the body of sin which commits sins and is enslaved to sin. It must be crucified or it will continue to be sin. If it is not crucified, it will live and you will die everlastingly. If it lives, you will continue to be enslaved to sin and you will die everlastingly. If it is crucified, then you will live everlastingly. God crucified it when He baptized you into the death of His Son and the death of His Son was a crucifixion! The newness of life that God was talking about is the newness of life that He gives you when He crucifies the old you so that the body of sin may be brought to nothing. In the same way that the body of Christ was brought to nothing by crucifixion so also by uniting you to the crucifixion of Jesus when He baptized you God has brought to nothing the body of sin which is you, that is your old man.

Here is where addicts have the advantage over other Christians. When I say addict I mean someone who is addicted to an insidious sin. People are addicted to porn, alcohol, controlled substances. Some people are sexaholics and some are kleptomaniacs, but whatever the sin may be at least the person who is addicted knows that he is enslaved to them. When someone is addicted to an insidious sin of this sort there is no denying that I do what do not want to do. As one addict put it to me, "I can ask for forgiveness and use at the same time."

Now, I am not advising the congregation to go out and get addicted to something simply so that they may be spared the temptation of believing that they are not enslaved to sin. But that is the temptation of those who are not addicted to an insidious sin such as the ones that I have just named. Those who are not addicted to an insidious sin such as the ones I have just described are more easily tempted to believe that they are not enslaved to sin in the first place. They love it when pastor describes sin as merely the acts of disobedience against God's commands because that way they can justify themselves before God by thinking to themselves that at least sometimes they do good things. They don't always do bad things. The person who does not suffer from an addiction suffers from the same body of sin that a person who is addicted suffers from and that body of sin will convince them of their own righteousness before God. It is the height of pride that will tell them that they are not so bad. And so it should be a word of comfort to anyone who suffers from an addiction in this congregation that at least God has pounded into you by hard experience that you are enslaved to sin. There is no way to deny it. And the worst state of them all is to be addicted to an insidious sin and still not be able to admit that you are enslaved to it.

There is no way to be liberated from this slavery except by death. You are the one committing the sins out of the body of sin and what is the body of sin? It is you! You must die in order to live. You must be crucified or you will continue in sin unto death. And so God put you to death. He crucified you. He crucified the old you, the old man. He crucified you when He baptized you into the death of His Son and since the death of His Son was a crucifixion, He baptized you into crucifixion and put you to death.

The body of sin has therefore been brought to nothing and since the crucifixion of Jesus is inseparable from His resurrection, if you have been baptized into His death, you have also been baptized into His resurrection.

This resurrection is the new life. The new life is the life where the body of sin has been crucified and brought to nothing. It is a new life where you are no longer enslaved to sin.

Now the one who died has been justified from the sin.

You have been baptized into the death of Christ. Therefore you have died. You were buried and everything through baptism into death. Since you have died in baptism, you have been justified from sin.

Well, now wait a minute pastor, I thought we were justified by grace through faith. You are. Now you are telling me that I am justified if I have died and I have died if I am baptized because I am baptized into the death of Christ? That's right. Well, aren't those two different things? No. Because God has joined them together. And what God has joined together, let no one put asunder.

To be justified by grace through faith is to be baptized. To be baptized is to be justified by grace through faith. They are not two separate things. They are the same thing. That is why when Peter sees the household of Cornelius praising the Lord with the Holy Spirit he says, "Who can keep these people from being baptized? They have received the Holy Spirit even as we have." Who can prevent it?

If someone talks to you about being saved by grace through faith and yet never gets around to talking about baptism, then they are not talking about being saved by grace through faith. If a person talks about baptism and never gets around to talking about being saved by grace through faith, then he is not talking about baptism even if he says that he is. In the 16th century the problem was that people talked about baptism without talking about being saved by grace through faith. In our own century the problem is that people talk about being saved by grace through faith and don't talk about baptism.

The one who has died has been justified from sin. The one who is baptized into Christ is the one who has died.

Then the clincher. If we have died with Christ, then we believe. I know that it says that if we have died with Christ, then we believe that we will also live together with him, but listen to the language anyway. If we have died, then we believe.

I have finally found it. I have searched high and low for it. Here is the passage that says that baptism gives you faith. If we have died, we believe. If we have died, we believe that we will also live together with Him, but if we have died, we believe it! We have faith! And how have we died? We died when we were baptized so when we were baptized we had faith! After all the Scripture says that if we have died, we believe—that we will also live with Him. It is faith that we will live with Him, but what is faith if not faith that believes that we will also live with Him.

Death no longer has lordship over Christ. He rose from the dead. But then if we were baptized into His death and resurrection then death no longer has lordship over us. And if death no longer has lordship over us, then neither does sin. If we are no longer enslaved to sin because we have died and death no longer has lordship over us because we live together with Him, then when we were released from sin we were released from death. There is no difference. Death no longer has lordship over you. The reason that death no longer has lordship over you is that you have already died. The death you died was the death of being baptized into Christ which ended in resurrection. Thus your baptism will end in your resurrection.

This is your new life. It is a life free from enslavement to sin and to death. It is a new life that is already yours. While you may look in the mirror and it looks that you are dying, inwardly you are renewed day by day because you have already been given newness of life in Christ Jesus.

Jesus died one time. He died in regards to sin to make the sin offering and provide the death into which you have been baptized. Jesus then lives an active life at the right hand of the Father. It is on going life. Such is your new life. Your death occurred once when God baptized you. Your new life is on going. It is not just that you have new life when the Lord returns to raise you from your graves. It is that you have new life right now. The resurrected life is already yours.

Now in light of all of this, reckon yourselves dead to sin and living to God in Christ Jesus. Why? Because you are.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.