

Written Copy: 1 Corinthians 6: 11b, 17-20 “God Still with Us in Baptism”

Mid-Week Advent Service #2

Wednesday, December 9th, 2020

Text: 1 Corinthians 6:11b, 17-20

^{11b} But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Exegetical Statement

Paul has been talking about how some (but not all) in the Corinthian Church struggled with various worldly sins. But all of, y allowing themselves to be washed in the waters of Baptism, have been cleansed of the sinful stains on their record. They have been chosen to be God's holy, set apart, purified people for whom all charges of sinful disobedience that could be presented before the LORD have been dismissed in the name and by the power of faith in Christ Jesus that is given by the Holy Spirit in baptism. As one thus cleansed what should my life look like? Paul argues there are those things that are no spoken against by Scripture that may not be what is profitable in my life of faith, things that could draw me in and take the place of Christ ruling over my life. There are those things like food which are good and useful gifts now but will not be such forever. In eternal life there will ne no need to eat in order to live. So we should not give food a place in our lives that is more important than the LORD. Paul next turns his attention to an issue raised earlier, that of a man having intercourse with his father's wife. He argues that since our bodies are gifts from the LORD that were redeemed, cleansed, and set apart in Baptism for His own special purpose we are to treat them as such with eyes not on what is good for us now, but what is needed for us to attain eternal life. The Holy Spirit in Baptism unites Himself to us in a very special and supernatural way. We become one with Him, so that our bodies and lives become His temple and His instruments for His work to bring faith to the world around us. It is similar to the way the two become one in marriage. So the sin of sex outside of marriage amounts to our separating our bodies from Christ and uniting them sinfully in disobedience to His will and command. Unlike other sins, which are done outside of our bodies, a Christian who commits this sexual sin is corrupting this union with the Spirit and is sinning against his own body which the LORD has claimed and redeemed through the blood of Jesus. Therefore we are to flee from the sin of sexual promiscuity, and instead remain united with the LORD through the indwelling presence of His Spirit so that our bodies and lives remain His holy temple where His real presence dwells in us and with us. Our bodies are not our own property, they were bought with a price, and the price is Christ's shed blood. Therefore as temples of the Spirit we are to bring glory to God in what we say and do, and who we are in Christ Jesus.

Focus Statement:

In Baptism our Savior Jesus Christ pours into our hearts and lives all that He won for us on the cross, it is His supernatural way of giving His gracious gifts of forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life to us. He unites Himself intimately with us and through that relationship works to keep us in faith, uniting us in Christ's death and resurrection so that we continue to die to sin and rise to the new life He gives us.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Many outside of the Lutheran faith see Baptism as a symbolic tradition that has no deeper sacramental meaning. Others see it as a talisman that protects their child from all evil no matter how they raise them. Others confess the Spirit's presence but fail to understand the intimate way the LORD takes up residence in our lives or that our sinful selfish actions can disconnect us from this intimate relationship.

What the hearer should do as a result:

We make use of His gift of confession and absolution as the way in which He keeps us as His holy cleansed temple and renews/grows our intimate relationship with Him bringing glory to God through our lives

Subject Sentence: Intimately united with the Spirit in Baptism

Introduction: Wrong Views of Baptism

What does Baptism mean to you? Your answer to that question may be different than what it means to others who are not life-long Lutherans. And it may even be different than some of those who have grown up in the Lutheran Church.

Outside of the Lutheran and Catholic Church baptism is a traditional act that is done for the sake of formality. These are Christians that don't confess and believe in the powerful working God promises us happens in baptism. If it has any spiritual importance at all, it is seen as the pronouncement that this person has joined the Church at large as a member of the local congregation. Very often it marks a decision that the person being baptized has made about their faith. These are the churches that have a "Christening ceremony" for babies and children. This ceremony serves as the official welcome ceremony into the Church. But beyond that there is nothing supernatural that is going on. Christening is the promise the parents and the Church makes that they will instruct the child in the faith so that, when they are old enough, they confess their decision and acceptance of Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This view puts the work of baptism all in the hands of the individual and not as a work of the Holy Spirit.

Another false view that reflects the other end of the spectrum is the idea that once the child is baptized it is sealed in the faith and there is no possible way that person can ever fall away. Here Baptism is seen as some kind of charm or talisman that supernaturally protects the person. The parents don't have to do anything else, don't have to instruct the child in the faith or take them to church. They've got an extended lifetime warranty in Jesus, He's got them covered. Parents who take this approach to raising their baptized child often see them grow up without faith at all. Baptism is certainly a sealing in the faith, but when separated from the Spirit's presence and work in God's Word faith will dwindle and disappear.

Then there are those who see a greater baptism than a water baptism. The water baptism purifies you from sin. But you still need the special anointing baptism of the Holy Spirit such as happened on the day of Pentecost, where the Spirit's presence is accompanied by miraculous signs like speaking in tongues. This is what welcomes you into God's kingdom. While this did happen to those gathered in the upper room on Pentecost and is seen to occur when the Gospel is first preached to the Gentiles as the sign that the Spirit is given to them too, it is not consistently seen as the sign of the Spirit's presence or the way He intends to work as the Church expands across the world. Paul in his letters written to the Gentile Churches he plants plays down these miraculous signs as things which, while they exist now, are going away, and are not worthy to put one's faith and trust in.

What We Confess about Baptism and it's Importance

So how do we, as Missouri Synod Lutherans view baptism differently than most other Christian denominations? First off is the importance we place on it as the work we as the Church are called to do. We regard it with the utmost importance because Jesus did as well. In **Matthew 28: 18-22** **¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."** Jesus' final marching orders to His Church as He was preparing to ascend to that place where He is exercising all authority over heaven and earth was to go out among the nations teaching and baptizing in the name of the Triune God. He wants the whole world to experience baptism, and to receive the gifts that come through it, and commands the Church to provide it.

And what are the wonderful gifts we receive in baptism? What do we see Jesus' receiving in His baptism? **Matthew 3:16-17** **¹⁶ 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; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."** The Holy Spirit descending to rest upon Him, and the voice of the Father declaring that this is My Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Just as in Jesus' baptism the Holy Spirit descended and came to rest upon you, coming through the means of the water of Baptism.

He was promised and was placed there by the powerful working the Spirit in God's Words of promise in Scripture. It is the promise we read in **Acts 2:38-39** **³⁸ And Peter said to them, "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. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."** God's powerful Word, that does what it says, shows us our sin, and moves us to repent. It moves us to confess that our works are sinful, that they stand opposed to God's will. His powerful Word creates in us the desire to change. And in the application of the baptismal water His Word promises that we receive the Holy Spirit as Christ's gift. This gift is for all men, as Christ desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The Holy Spirit is washed on to you and into you. As **1 Corinthians 6:11b** states **"But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."** All of us are sinful. All of us need to be washed clean of the filth that is our sinful attitude and acts of disobedience. And in baptism those things are washed away. Our sin is forgiven, we are changed from sinner to those who are sanctified, made holy and set apart for the purposes of God in Christ Jesus. And you were justified. What does it mean to be justified? That's courtroom language. As each of us

appear before God, the righteous judge, we stand accused of all our sinful acts of disobedience that we have committed. We stand guilty and the punishment due is the eternal suffering of hell. But on the cross Jesus took all those exhibits which are you sin and my sin. Jesus had no sin of His own but chose to become your sin. He stood before the Father and said, "These sinful deeds are my responsibility now, and I will take the punishment due for them." Since Jesus took all your sins and their punishment, you have nothing left to be accused of or punished for. You stand before that righteous judge with no charges against you. You are in right standing with Him, or to put it another way you have been justified in His sight.

This makes baptism the gracious and loving gift of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Titus 3:4-7** ⁴ **But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,** ⁵ **he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,** ⁶ **whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,** ⁷ **so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."** Baptism is the gift that comes from the loving heart of God. It's His work done on our behalf where He washes us clean from sin, renews our relationship with Him and makes us heirs of the gift Christ won for us on the cross: eternal life.

How can baptism give you such wonderful gifts? Paul explains how baptism is the supernatural union of you with the Holy Spirit. **1 Corinthians 6:15-17** ¹⁵ **Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!** ¹⁶ **Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh."** ¹⁷ **But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him."** Here Paul is using the imagery of the intimate personal union that is God's gift of marriage. When God created Adam and Eve, He created the institution of marriage where the two become one. They join together emotionally in love, in purpose as they live out their lives, and physically through God's good gift of sexual intimacy. But when the Christian takes this good gift and abuses it to commit sexual sins outside of marriage, it is no longer a blessed act. It separates us from the union that we have with the Spirit, since the Spirit will not unite Himself to sinful behavior. That is how intimate our union is with the Holy Spirit in baptism, like the intimate union marriage was designed to be.

Paul goes on to say (**1 Corinthians 6:18-19**) ¹⁸ **Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.** ¹⁹ **Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own"**. The intimate union we have in Baptism makes your body a temple, the holy dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. To sin sexually is to defile that temple in the most awful way. But the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and washed you clean of such sins to make your body that sacred place, a sacred temple, where He dwells in you and with you every day of your life.

And it is through this intimate relationship that all the gifts Christ won for us on the cross come flowing in. **Romans 6:3-5** ³ **Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** ⁴ **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.** ⁵ **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.** This intimate joining is what we have through the Spirit's presence. He intimately joins us to Jesus, because the Trinity is always joined together, always present together working for the same purpose. So our joining to the Spirit joins us to Jesus in the same intimate manner. We become one with our Lord and Savior. His death on the cross becomes our death to sin. His resurrection becomes our resurrection. Through Him our baptism brings us a new life that we live, one where our will and purpose is no longer to please ourselves but live a new life of obedient faith in Christ.

Like soap does to the physical dirt on the skin of our bodies, the Holy Spirit came upon you in your baptism and washed you clean. But He isn't like soap in that, after your done with your shower, the soap and dirt together is washed off you and down the drain. The Holy Spirit doesn't leave you after washing you clean. He continues to work on you to keep you clean. He does this through the work of Confession and Absolution. In this work it is as if the Spirit examines your body and points out to you that which you don't want to see, the dirt of sin you have smeared on yourself. Sometimes it gets smeared on without your realizing it, you've sinned against the Lord, disobeying Him without even realizing it because you've followed your heart instead of following His word. Other times we purposefully wallow in the mud pit of sin because we like how it feels, so much so we refuse to see how dirty it makes us. Because the Spirit has made us His temple, His dwelling place, He refuses to allow His temple to remain soiled with sin. He directs our attention to these stains through His words of law. He opens our eyes to see not what we think we look like, but how we truly look in the eyes of our holy God. And that true vision of ourselves breaks our heart. It is then the Holy Spirit comes with the words of the Gospel, that although we've sinned again this sin, like all the rest has been washed to the cross in our baptism and removed from us. Our record before the Father is once again spotless, we are considered right and just in the eyes of the Father.

This is the promise that is declared to you in the words of the Absolution. It is the gift you receive through that intimate union you have with Him. **Galatians 3:26-27** ²⁶ **for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.** ²⁷ **For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."** In Baptism you "put on Christ". He gives to you His life of perfection, His life of righteous thoughts, words, and actions. He clothes you in it as the baptismal waters wash over you. When the Father looks at you, He sees not your sin, but the perfect life of Jesus that is His gift to you in Baptism. For this reason, in your baptism and mine, the Father's declaration given to the Son at His baptism is declared at yours as

well: **(Matthew 3:17) "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."** When He looks at you, He sees the righteousness and perfection of Jesus given to you as His gift in Baptism. For this reason, I can say, "in the stead and by the command of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, forgive you all your sins in the name of the one you were baptized into, "the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Conclusion

Baptism is not just a tradition or ritual that is devoid of spiritual power. It is not a charm or a talisman that guarantees salvation apart from the work of the Spirit in the Word. It is not completed by a repeating of the fire that descended on Pentecost. It is the supernatural work of the Father, giving to you all the Son earned for you in His death and resurrection, delivering it to you personally through the real and ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit with you and intimately joined to you. He comes to bring you to faith in Christ and keep you in faith to Christ. He is always at work, even when you can't see Him or feel Him at work. As Jesus explained to Nicodemus who was puzzled by the Spirit's mysterious work **(John 3:6-8) ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.**" In your baptism you were born again to a new life by the working of the Spirit. Just as you can't see the wind, but you can see the work that it does as it makes the branches in the trees sway, and sometimes even blows trees down, so too is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives through baptism. He worked most powerfully to bring you to faith, changing your heart and your life. And He continues to work in you every day. He is at work to change you, keep you in faith, and draw you closer to your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And when you doubt His presence and work, as do all Christians from time to time, look back at the day you were baptized. Your baptism is God's gift of the Spirit's presence and continuing work in you until the day you see Christ face to face. Amen.