**Baptism**

**Introduction:**

We have set aside today as “Baptism Sunday.” There will be four candidates for baptism at the 11:00 service. This morning I want to focus on the topic of “Baptism.”

After His resurrection and prior to His ascension to heaven Jesus commanded His disciples to “*Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”* (Mt.28.19) Many refer to this verse as the Great Commission. This is the “marching orders” for the Church. We go to all nations preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ, making disciple of Christ, and baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

What we see from this one verse is that baptism is the sign instituted by Christ Himself to demonstrate a setting apart of a particular people to God as being part of the visible church. From the very beginning of Christianity baptism is the sign identifying a person a being part of God’s team. Baptism is your team uniform. Baptism is the badge – our ID card.

**The Birth of the Church**

After Jesus’ ascension to the Father the followers of Christ took these marching orders serious. As these faithful followers gathered in Jerusalem the Lord filled them with Holy Spirit and they rushed out into the streets proclaiming the mighty deeds of God through Christ to the multitudes that had come to celebrate the Day of Pentecost. Peter stood up in the middle of the multiple and began proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and as he concluded he said, *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”* (Acts 2.36) *Now when* the crowd *heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”* (Acts 2.37-38a) *“For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”* (Acts 2.39) *So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.* (Acts.2.41-42)

So, you can see that the early church took the Great Commission seriously. They went out, making disciples of Jesus Christ, and baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And that is what they continued to do as they scattered out into the region of Judea and Samaria and throughout the Roman Empire.

**The Historical Record**

The book of Acts is the divinely inspired historical record of the early church and when you read it you will discover that people from every background received baptism. We see believers from a Jewish background being baptized in Acts 2.5, 41.

We see believers from a Samaritan background being baptized in Acts 8.5, 16. We see a believer from an Ethiopian background being baptized in Acts 8.37-38. We see believers from a Gentile background being baptized in Acts 10.1-2, 48a. We see a woman by the name of Lydia and her household from a Roman background being baptized in Acts 16.14-15. We see a Roman Jailer and his household being baptized in Acts 16.31-34. We see a leader of a synagogue and his household being baptized in Acts 18.8a. We see many becoming believers out of a pagan and corrupt society being baptized in the city of Corinth (Acts 8.8b) and a group of twelve men who had been following John the Baptist becoming believers in Christ and being baptized in Acts 19.3-5.

What the point? The book of Acts being the divinely inspired historical record of the early church shows us that regardless of your background when you become a believer in Jesus Christ you should be baptized – you and your household.

That’s a lot of information so let’s review:

Christian Baptism is the application of water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a visible sign to demonstrate a setting apart of a particular community of people to God as being part of the visible Church. (Kelso)

Baptism has no magical powers. Baptism does not convey salvation (Baptismal Regeneration). Baptism it is not necessary to receive salvation (The thief on the cross). Baptism is a sign instituted by Christ Himself to demonstrate a setting apart of a particular people to God as being part of the visible church.

The word “baptize” comes from the Greek word *baptizo* is used for dipping, pouring, sprinkling, and to immerse. The New Testament does not explicitly specify what mode was used for administering baptism therefore any of the four modes valid.

There are many things we do as Christians that are private. For example: Bible reading, prayer, meditation and reflection, even our giving. But there is one thing in the Christian Faith that is public – Baptism. Baptism is a public ceremony of God’s goodness and grace through Christ.

Baptism is a Public Confession of Faith. Baptism is a Public Commitment of Obedience. Baptism is a Public Connection to the Church. And Baptism is a Public Celebration of God’s grace through Christ. Let’s take a moment to look at each of these.

**Public Confession of Faith**

At baptism believers are asked a question like, do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation?

And Christian parents who bring the children to receive baptism are asked questions like; do you acknowledge your child’s need for the work of salvation in (his/her) heart? Do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for (his/her) salvation, when one day (he/she) will profess Jesus Christ as (his/her) Lord and Savior?

Baptism is also a: **Public Commitment of Obedience**

At baptism believers are asked a question like; Do you promise, in humble reliance upon the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live your life as a follower of Jesus Christ?

And Christian parents who bring the children to receive baptism are asked questions like; Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon the Holy Spirit; that you will: Endeavor to set before (him/her) a godly example, that you will pray with and for (him/her), that you will teach (him/her) the Word of God, and that you will strive by all the means of that God will give you to bring (him/her) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

Baptism is also a: **Public Connection to the Church**

As I mentioned before baptism is the sign identifying a person a being part of God’s team. Baptism is your team uniform. And we believe that covenant children, youth, and adults are all members of the church.

Baptism is also a: **Public Celebration of God’s Grace through Christ**

Remember the 3000 new believers who were baptized in Jerusalem after Peter’s preaching? Well, the text continues telling us that those new baptized believers continue to gather together day by day with gladness and praising God. (Acts 2.46-47)

Baptism is an opportunity for all of us to celebrate what God has done in our lives personally and in the lives of others.

Baptism is a Public Confession of Faith, a Public Commitment of Obedience, a Public Connection to the Church, and a Public Celebration of God’s grace through Christ.

**The Philippian Jailer**

There is an episode in Acts 16 that pulls these four things together. The Apostle Paul and Salas were beating and put into prison for preaching the preaching the Gospel in the city of Philippi.

*But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened.**When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!” And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.*

**The Philippian Jailer**

 You talk about joy in the midst of trials! Paul and Silas had been beaten with rods, the guards had inflicted many blows upon them, thrown in prison and *about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God.* That’s having joy in the midst of trials! And guess what? God showed up causing a great earthquake, opening all the doors, and releasing the prisoners from their shackles.

Let me pause for a second and say; that’s actually what we should expect to do for us as we have joy in the midst of trials. We should expect God to shake things up, open doors that had been locked, and release us from the shackles that bind us!

Well, back to the story. When the earthquake rocked the prison the chains that held Paul and Silas were unfastened and the doors swung wide open. The jailer assumed that the prisoners had escaped. Knowing that Roman law required the death penalty for prison guards that lose prisoners that had been placed in their custody, the jailer drew his sword and was about to take his own life.

But Paul called out loudly, encouraging the jailer to refrain from harming himself, reassuring him that no prisoner had escaped. Calling for a torch for light, the jailer *fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”*

The Philippian jailer came to saving faith in Christ Jesus. Paul, Silas, and this new believer went to the man’s house and shared the word of the Lord to his entire household. They all believed in Christ and the Jailer was *immediately baptized, he and all his household.* And after the baptism of the entire household they brought in the food and *rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.*

We don’t have any record of what happened to the Philippian jailer and his family after their conversion and baptism but we do know that Paul’s traveling companion and the Luke stay in Philippi as Paul and Silas traveled to Thessalonica. We can assume that the jailer’s household was the core group the Lord used to establish the Church at Philippi under the direction of Luke. (Phil.1.1ff)

I think the story of the Philippian jailer is an excellent example that baptism is a Public Confession of Faith, a Public Commitment of Obedience, a Public Connection to the Church, and Baptism is a Public Celebration of God’s grace through Christ.

**Conclusion:**

* Believe in the Gospel
* If you are a believer in Christ get baptized!
* Consider the baptism of your children
* Use the baptism of a new believer as an opportunity to examine your own walk.
* Most of the time new believers have a lot of passion for Christ whereas older believer can lose their first love. Therefore the baptism of a new believer is an opportunity to repent and renew our passion for Christ.(Rev.2.4-5)
* Use the baptism of covenant children as an opportunity to examine your Christian parenting and household management. (Eph.6.4)
* Use the baptism of covenant children as an opportunity to examine your commitment to serving the others in the covenant community – the church.

**Call to Prayer**

*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.* (Gal.2.20)

**Benediction:**

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.* (Jd.1.24-25)