

Text:

January 7, 2018

Theme: Baptism - Who Needs It?

When you have an opportunity to spend time among people who have very little, you quickly realize that there's a big difference between what we have, what we want, and what we actually need. Many things that we have today aren't actually things we need, but merely things we wanted and were able to obtain. Today is set aside as the Baptism of our Lord Sunday and as we think about Baptism, it's important for us to consider the question of the day, "Baptism, who needs it?"

I. Christ, by instituting Baptism, made it clear that everyone needs Baptism. A. But why do we need it? 1. We need Baptism because we are less than perfect. How many perfect people do you know? It sounds like a foolish question, but there are people out there who think they are perfect or nearly perfect. But as Christians, we know we are less than perfect, that we need our Savior because we were and still are sinners. We may like to rank ourselves so that we appear as better sinners, those who sin less than all those other people, but at the end of the day, sin is sin and less than perfect creates the need for the forgiveness available as faith arrives at Baptism.

2. We need Baptism because we can't fix what we have broken. How many of you have ever dropped a glass or a plate and it shattered on the kitchen floor? Now, how many of you have attempted to put the pieces back together? We've all learned that a broom, dustpan, and trash can is our best solution. As we look at our lives, we see, experience, and are fully aware of our brokenness. But what we need to be reminded of is that we are totally incapable of fixing what we have broken. We want to fix it ourselves; we even try numerous times, but, as we know, we are broken and we need Someone else to fix our brokenness, that Someone who comes to us in Baptism.

3. We need Baptism because we can't save ourselves. Imagine for a moment that you were standing on top of the highest part of our church roof near the end. If you slipped and started to fall, how many of you could keep yourself from landing on the ground? Saving ourselves is one step beyond slipping and falling off the church roof. It's not next to impossible. It's impossible. You and I, we can't save ourselves and you're wasting your time if you're trying to do so. As Christ instituted Baptism, He made provisions to save us from ourselves, provisions that enable us to live eternally with Him instead of without Him, provisions for a far better life.

B. Realizing we need Baptism, what does it offer us? 1. It offers us the gift of faith. How many ways can you obtain faith without God's intervention? Faith comes from God alone and it is His gift alone. No strings, no list of things we must do, no fine print. As you witness a Baptism, you witness God working, God doing something incredibly amazing. In a moment that looks so simple, God says to that child, "Welcome to the family of God. By My grace and by no other means, I have chosen to work faith in your heart through Baptism. Now, go and live life as My child." Nothing from the parents, from the Pastor, from the child. It's a gift of God.

2. It offers us forgiveness. Why do we care? Because we have sinned, because we have broken God's heart like that plate we dropped on the kitchen floor. Guilt is the ultimate problem and forgiveness is the ultimate solution. As we say in our Catechism, "Baptism works forgiveness of sins." Notice what it says, "Baptism

works.” It does something life-changing, life-long. What does it do for you personally? It works forgiveness. It offers you forgiveness. It takes all those things that are weighing on your mind, your heart, your soul, all those broken plates in your life and it says, “Forgiven. Restored in God’s sight. Now go in peace.”

3. It offers to rescue us. Suppose you fell into an abandoned well that was twenty feet deep. You yelled for help for hours, but help never arrived. As you were dosing off due to exhaustion, you suddenly heard footsteps and saw a rope being lowered into the well. Would it matter who was holding the rope as long as they got you out? We say in our Catechism that Baptism rescues us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. God, through an event that appears so simple, lowers the rope to rescue us from the well of sin, from the destructive powers of the devil. How He does it doesn’t matter. What matters is that He offers to lower the rope, to rescue us.

4. Baptism offers us eternal salvation. Within that five-word statement, there are two very important words. The first is “salvation.” Baptism offers, secures, and guarantees that we will be saved because Baptism is based on faith alone. When our moment to depart arrives, there’s no question, no worry, no fear because, as a baptized child of God who clings to his baptismal faith, salvation is guaranteed. That’s great news, but the even greater news occurs when we add the second word, the word “eternal.” If salvation were only temporary, would it really have any value? The salvation offered to us in Baptism is eternal. It lasts forever.

C. Because we need Baptism and because it offers us so much, how do we respond to our Baptism? 1. We remember it daily. How many of you forget how to tie your shoes from one day to the next or how to start your car? None of us forget those things. Along with all the things we remember and do without thinking, we place Baptism on that same level as something we remember like clock work, something that enters our minds every day. One way we assure ourselves that that happens is by beginning each new day saying to ourselves, “I begin this day as a baptized child of God, important and loved in His sight.”

2. We respond by choosing to serve. But why do we choose to serve? Because nothing else demonstrates the value we place on our God and His gift more than serving. Why? Because serving is a choice, something we do as an expression of gratitude. Serving and gratitude are always connected and with that connection, we offer God our appreciation, our thanks, our praise for instituting Baptism, for offering us the gift of Baptism, a gift more precious, more rare than any other gift. As we choose to serve the Lord with gladness, which is the only way to serve Him, we declare by our actions, “Praise God from whom all blessings flow!”

3. In life, there are things we have, things we want, and things we need. But beyond all those things, there’s a gift, a precious gift we desperately need. That gift is Baptism. Who needs it? You do and I do. Amen.