

Baptized for Me

Romans 6:1-11

Introduction

I tried to introduce the **Lectionary** and **Christian calendar** to the Baptist churches I pastored. I explained each special day and season every time we celebrated them. After explaining and celebrating **Baptism of the Lord Sunday** for the third time, an elderly deacon approached me and said, “I don’t get it; what’s the big deal about the Baptism of the Lord?”

I said, “Was your Baptism important?”

“Yes.”

“Who’s more important, you or Jesus?”

Then I explained once again what Jesus’ Baptism meant, why He was baptized and why we celebrate it. The crux of that question is, “Why was Jesus Baptized?” When we understand **why** He was baptized, we’ll understand **what** the “big deal” is.

Why Was Jesus Baptized?

The question naturally arises: John’s baptism was for the remission of sins. Jesus had no sin. Therefore, why did He need to be baptized? Jesus says, in fact, *“Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness”* (**Matthew 3:15**). One answer is that Jesus was **shown to be the Son of God** at His Baptism. Originally, **the Baptism of Jesus** was part of the **Epiphany** celebration. Now, it is celebrated the Sunday after Epiphany as its own feast day. We also see **all three Persons of the Trinity** here at the same time, disproving modalism, the heresy that says the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are just different ways God presents Himself to humanity at different times. The Father is affirming the Son who is baptized as the Spirit descends to anoint the Son and His ministry.

Our Connecting Link

But our focus today is that **Jesus identifies with us at Baptism**. He has come to die for sinful humanity. He is our **Substitute** and **Sacrifice**. In His baptism, He aligns Himself with us, effectively saying, “I am one of them.” As He identifies with us at His baptism, we identify with Him at ours.

Modes and Their Meanings

There are three modes of baptism, each with its own emphasis. (Read **Titus 3:5-8**). We are washed clean in Baptism. The method of **sprinkling** takes us back to how the high priests **cleansed** the tabernacle, its furnishings and the people by sprinkling them. **Pouring** emphasizes how we are **anointed** by the Holy Spirit at Baptism, just as the Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove, anointing Him and His ministry. Martin Luther’s preferred mode of Baptism, **immersion**, emphasizes our being **buried and raised with Christ**. That’s the meaning of Baptism that St. Paul is discussing in our Epistle lesson.

Buried with Christ

The **Explanation of the Small Catechism** says: *By Baptism we have been made to share in Christ's death and resurrection. As He has buried our sin, so we too can and must daily overcome and bury it.* This daily drowning or putting to death the Old Man is what we're talking about here. We are fallen creatures with that sin nature, even after Baptism. However, we are given the Spirit and the ability to not sin. Sometimes, we're too quick to play the fallen card. We can't help sinning, because we're fallen. What a helpless, hopeless life that would be if it were true, that we must sin every time the opportunity presents. I'm not saying that we can be perfect. I'm just echoing Paul at the beginning of the chapter. *Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! (v. 1-2).*

Living with Christ

The **Explanation** goes on to say: *And as He is risen from the dead and lives, so we too can and must daily live a new life in Him.* We die with Christ, but Baptism rescues us from death and the devil. Our death is a death to sin. Our life is a life lived to the glory of God. We live for His glory by producing the fruit of good works in our life. The life of a Christian is to look different from others. The fruit shows what kind of people we really are.

Means of Grace

Article X on The Holy Supper in the **Apology** says: *We speak of the presence of the living Christ, for we know that "death no longer has dominion over Him" (Romans 6:9).* This speaks to the effectiveness of Communion. Jesus died once, for all. He lives never to die again. At Communion, we receive the body and blood of the **living** Jesus Christ. That's where the power is. The Holy Spirit strengthens our faith through His body and blood. We make the sign of the cross to remember our Baptism. As we remember our Baptism, we remember His Baptism, which links us together. And we receive every blessing He gives to us in our Baptism as He was Baptized for us.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
