

Baptism Sermon 2018

The 2017 annual report compiled by “Lifeway” which is the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Church, showed a significant increase in Both church attendance and in new church plants for the 19th consecutive year. (That is really great news!) BUT for the 11th consecutive year the denomination showed a decline in membership as well as a decline in Baptisms.

- What does this mean? Well it means that:
- There are more churches ministering to more people, but the people attending those churches are unwilling to make a commitment to the church AND they don’t see the need OR the value and importance of baptism.

John MacArthur:

“The church in recent years has become very media oriented. Many people come to Christ by listening to Christian radio or watching Christian TV. They attend large events and crusades where they are asked to make a decision for Christ.”

- These people generally float around like spiritual honeybees and rarely become a consistent functioning part of a local body of believers. For that reason, many of them never submit to the ordinance of baptism.

Another reason for the decline in Baptism could be the unhealthy emphasis on pragmatism that seems to have overtaken evangelicalism.

- (*If you are unfamiliar with the term*) in essence Pragmatism says, *“If it works it must be good!”* If Jesus works for you then Jesus is good.
- In much of the church obedience to God is viewed in the light of THE immediate and personal benefits it can provide to the believer.
- We follow Jesus because He promises to give us our best life now. He provides inner peace, worldly success and financial prosperity. *Jesus works for me!*
- The common denominator in pragmatic churches is that they are self-centered rather than Christ centered.
- Jesus can give you a better marriage; He can get you out of debt, he can help you find a better job. As long as your faith leads to a more satisfying life then Jesus is a good thing. And that my friends is pragmatism.

Since Baptism doesn’t really possess any pragmatic value it is easily ignored.

- People have said, “The Thief on the cross didn’t need to be baptized to get into heaven so why should I embarrass myself in front of the church, put on a bathing suit and get my hair wet?”

IN light of this afternoon’s baptism, I would like to take this opportunity to underscore the Biblical mandate, to display the Biblical model and to lay out the Biblical meaning of Baptism.

Let's make those three things our outline points for today.

- The Mandate for Baptism
- The Model of Baptism
- The Meaning of Baptism

First: The Mandate for Baptism

Having overcome sin and death through his victory on the cross, Jesus literally shocked his disciples when he rose from the dead.

- The women who came to the tomb early in the morning on that first day of the week, expected to anoint Jesus' dead body with oil and spices. BUT when they entered the tomb, they were astonished to find an angel sitting in the very place where Jesus' body had once rested. And the angel said to them:

Mark 16: 6 "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

- No doubt, you are familiar with the narrative of how Jesus appeared on that glorious day to Mary Magdalene. He revealed himself to the two travelers on the road to Emmaus, and finally, He appeared in the upper room where the eleven disciples were hiding out.
- Eventually the disciples made their way back to the region of the Galilee where they met the Lord Jesus in the location they had previously arranged.
- Thanks to Matthew, we can listen in on their conversion.

Matthew 28:16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

- What an amazing statement Jesus makes here, surely it is worthy of our meditation.

During his earthly ministry Jesus demonstrated His authority over disease and sickness (Matt. 4:23) over demons (4:24) over sin (9:6) and even over death (5:41)

- He had the authority to lay down his life and to take it up again. (John 10:18)
- He possesses the sovereign authority to rule over heaven and earth and to subjugate Satan and his demons to eternal torment in the lake of fire. (Rev. 19:20)

The Father had given Jesus dominion, glory and a kingdom that all peoples, all nations and men of every language might serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will never pass away and his kingdom is one which will never be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

The Father gave sovereign authority to his Only Begotten Son, making him both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36)

Through his ascension, Jesus has been highly exalted and given a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, on the earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God. (Philippians 2)

Now in light of His absolute, sovereign authority, Jesus commands his disciples: Matthew 28:19 **Go therefore** (in light of who I am, GO) **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."**

- All of the Disciples of Christ in every generation are commanded to disciple other people. They are sent out to the nations (*as we saw last week*) to make disciples (*committed followers, men and women whose lives are dedicated to Christ*)
- And this Great Commission contains a mandate for believer's baptism.
- As they are going, they are commanded to BAPTIZE those who believe in Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel. Why is that? Because:
- Baptism is the initial act of obedience for those who are saved; it serves as a testimony of a believer's union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection.
- Now that we understand the Biblical Mandate for baptism, let's look at the Biblical Model of Baptism.

2. The Biblical Model

Reading through the book of Acts, it's easy to see the command of the Lord carried out through the witness and the work of the Apostles.

In Acts Ch. 2 Peter boldly proclaimed the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the people who gathered in the streets on the day of Pentecost.

- And God graciously opened the eyes of thousands enabling them to respond in repentance and faith to the call of the Gospel. Listen to Peter's words.

Acts 2: 37 **Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"** 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.**

- We understand that a person is saved from the Wrath of God by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone AS revealed in the Scriptures alone for the glory of God alone.
- But According to the Word of God, Christian Baptism serves as a sign that publically displays a believer's identification with Christ. IT IS an act of faith and obedience that is mandated by the Lord for all who believe.

As we study God's plan of redemption throughout the Bible we find a connection between Belief and Baptism EVEN in the PAGES of the Old Testament.

- Referring back to the Book of Exodus the Apostle Paul points to the model of Baptism that we see in the redemption of Israel.
- Turn with me to the book of 1 Corinthians Chapter 10.

1 Corinthians 10:1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

- Here Paul uncovers the pattern of God's redeeming grace that is contained in the historic narrative of the Exodus.
- First we need to remember that God Choose Israel from among all of the nations of the world; He elected them in sovereign grace, even before they became a nation, He set his love upon them.

Deuteronomy 7: 6 "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

- God's plan of redemption begins with Sovereign Election.
- Before they did anything good or bad, for reasons known only to himself and apart from any foreseen faith, God graciously chose from among fallen men a people unto salvation.
- And friends, what we see in the O.T. becomes much clearer when we look in the N.T. Consider Ephesians Ch. 1.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

- Looking back to the book of Exodus we can see that those whom God chooses, He powerfully redeems from bondage and delivers them from the hands of their enemies.

Exodus 6: 6 Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

7 I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

- When God powerfully delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt he immediately brought the whole nation through the waters of the Red Sea.
- On one side, they were slaves living under the cruel hand of their oppressors BUT on the other side, they were finally FREE.
- There was absolutely NO WAY that they could take credit for own deliverance; it was the strong arm of the Lord that separated the waters so that they could walk through on Dry ground.
- God's chosen people going through the waters of the Red Sea serves as a beautiful model of Believers Baptism. Let's read Paul's Words again:

1 Corinthians 10:1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

Reading through the O.T. can be a lot like looking at one of those old pictures, the kind you have to really stare at for a while in order to find the hidden image. Well Paul uncovers the model of redemption and the ordinances of God that are hidden in plain sight in the pages of the O.T.

- Israel's immersion into the Red Sea points to the New Testament Ordinance of Baptism which was a once and done experience that marks our redemption.
- And then, the ongoing provision of manna from heaven and water from the rock represent the Ordinance of the Lord's Table where we continually remember the gracious provision of God through Christ as we travel this pilgrim's path.

Now, we have seen the Biblical Mandate for baptism, we have reviewed the Biblical Model for Baptism, let's move on to consider the Biblical Meaning of Baptism.

3 The Biblical Meaning of Baptism.

Since Harvest is now a Bible Fellowship Church, let's go to the "Articles of Faith" and read what our denomination says about the Ordinance of Baptism.

Article 20 – Ordinances: 20-1 Baptism

"Water baptism, the immersion of the believer, is a visible testimony to the work of regeneration and a mark of identification and union with Christ. It has no saving or cleansing power, but it is the answer of a good conscience before God; hence, it should be administered only to those who have, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, realized the forgiveness of sins and possess the assurance of acceptance with God."

- In the Articles of Faith, each statement is accompanied by a Scripture reference because our faith is not based on the words of men but on the Word of God.
- One of those accompanying Scriptures is found in Acts Ch. 8.

Here we find the Spirit of God directing Philip, who was one of the first Deacons to travel the road that goes from Jerusalem down into Gaza. Along that road, Phillip joined himself to an Ethiopian eunuch, a prominent man from the royal court.

- Philip heard the Ethiopian Man reading from the book of Isaiah and he asked (vs 30) **“DO you understand what you are reading?”**
- To which the Eunuch replied, **“How can I unless someone guides me.”** (Vs 31)

And then, expounding on the life of Christ from the text of Isaiah 53, Phillip shared the Gospel and God graciously saved the Ethiopian Man. A little further, down the road, having been born of God the Eunuch said to Phillip, Acts 8: 36 **"See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?"** 38 **And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.**

- The Ethiopian’s baptism serves as a sign, a visible testimony to God’s gracious work of redemption and a mark of His identification and union with Christ.

SO it is that Water Baptism serves as a SIGN. And what is a sign, well a sign is something that Points beyond itself to a greater reality.

- Coming to church this morning I passed a sign for “State Street” Now the sign itself was NOT State Street it merely pointed to that which is State Street.

Paul tells us in Romans 4 & Colossians 2 that circumcision was a sign in the O.T. and baptism is a sign in the N.T. Both of these signs point beyond themselves to a greater reality.

- So we understand that Believer’s Baptism is much more than a refreshing dip of cool water on a hot day, it points to a believer’s union with Christ.

Colossians 2:11 **In him (in Christ) also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,**

- Here Paul says that circumcision is a sign. It involves the removal or putting off, of filthy sinful flesh. And we have come to understand that, true circumcision is NOT accomplished through the knife of a Moil but by the Spirit of God.

Like circumcision, baptism is a sign that points to the cleansing work of God accomplished through the New Birth.

- By grace, God washes away our sin, He removes the heart of stone and gives us a new heart that is sensitive to the Spirit and the Word of God.
- The old man has been crucified with Christ and the believer is raised to new life by the Power of God. Paul continues in his letter to the Colossians saying:

Colossians 2:12 **having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.**
13 **And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,**

- When a Believer plunges under the water in baptism, He is declaring his union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.
- When Jesus died, I died with him, When he was buried I was in him, and when he rose from the dead, He provided me with resurrection life and through that resurrection, death no longer has a hold on me!
- Let's take this a step deeper by turning to Romans chapter 6.

Romans 6: 3 **Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?**

- Take notice here that Paul speaks of being “**Baptized into Christ Jesus.**”
- Here Paul describes an immersion that has nothing to do with water, but everything to do with Christ. He is speaking of a believer's vital union with the Lord Jesus.
- We have been baptized, plunged or immersed into Christ himself and we have become one with him.
- Like the branch that is grafted into the vine, we share the very life of Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

John 15: 5 **I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.**

1 Corinthians 6:17 **He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.**

- Those who are Born of God have “baptized into Christ” and now they abide in a living union with Him. Paul goes on to describe that union:

Romans 6:4 **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.**

- We were buried and we died (simple past tense) with Christ, in order that we might live our lives in a brand new way, empowered by the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead.
- You can't help but notice Paul's confidence as he describes a believer's union with Christ.
- In VS 5, the word “**IF**” is a first class condition that can be translated, **SINCE**. Since we have been united with Christ in a death like his, (through Faith) **WE** will most certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

A.T. Robertson “Baptism is a picture of the past and a prophecy of the future.”

- We who died with him, will also be raised with him. **And so shall we ever be with the Lord!**

As our Study of Baptism draws to a close, I am not going to ask if you have been baptized. There is a much more important question for me to ask you:

- DO YOU believe that Jesus DIED in YOUR place on the cross of Calvary? DO you believe that HE actually rose from the dead securing the forgiveness of sins for His beloved people?
- Has God graciously opened your eyes to see your need for a Savior?
- Do you understand that YOU are a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior?

DO you live your life, here and now in the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit saying with the Apostle Paul,

Galatians 2: 20 **I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

- If you are not living in the confidence that I described, I invite you, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ to cry out to God

Pray: