

Trinity

Text: Matthew 28:19

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Theme: Washed in God's Name

This is a special weekend for us at Benediction. We are celebrating 5 baptisms. The Lueck family was baptized yesterday morning, and Chase Fischer was baptized in our service this morning. In addition we have a number of children who have just been born or who are on the way, and we look forward to a number of baptisms in the coming months.

But what is baptism? Why do we pour water over a persons head and think that anything special happens. First, it might be good to consider what the word, "Baptize" means. It is a Greek word that means "to wash." Mark 7:4 says *"When [the pharisees] come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing [Greek- baptizing] of cups, pitchers, and kettles."* If we spoke Greek, your mom might tell you to baptize the dishes or your dad might tell you to go outside and baptize the car. It would not be anything with any religious significance at all. You are just washing the dirt off of something.

But when we baptize in God's name, we are not removing dirt, but sin. In Acts 22:16 Paul was told, *"Get up, be baptized and **wash your sins away**, calling on His name."* Peter writes, *"Baptism... now saves you, **not as the removal of dirt from the body** but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."* (1 Peter 3:21)

When we baptize in God's name, we are washing sin away in God's name.

I. Through baptism God becomes our dear Father.

In Romans 5 Paul states exactly what we were before faith in Christ. He calls us powerless, ungodly, sinners, and even God's enemies. (Rm 5:6-10) What did God do to such people who turned against Him to the evil desires of their sinful nature? He sent His only beloved Son to redeem us from sin, death, and all the power of the devil. His desire was to take sinful human beings, and make us into His sons and daughters through faith. He does that through baptism. In baptism God washes away our sins and makes us holy and righteous. He adopts us as His sons and daughters in Christ. In Galatians 3 Paul writes, *"You are all **sons of God** through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ"* (Gal 3:26,27)

As His baptized children, we can go to God confidently in prayer, calling the creator and judge of the universe, "Our Father." He cares for us and provides for us, just as a good father cares for and provides for his children. He disciplines us in ways that are not pleasant at the time, but they are always for our good in the end. He has an inheritance waiting for us in heaven that will never perish spoil or fade. This new relationship with God the Father is expressed well in the second verse of Paul Gerhardt's hymn, "If God Himself Be for Me,"

**This I believe, yea rather of this I make my boast,
That God is my dear Father, the friend who loves me most.**

God loves us and cares for us as His dear children in Christ. Every one of us is precious to Him. He knows our name, and nothing can ever rip us from His loving arms.

That is a great example to our Fathers on this Father's Day. There was a time when I thought that God is a lot like our fathers. However, one day when I did a Bible study on how God is like our fathers, a woman walked out. I didn't think much of it at the time, however, she told me why several years later. She said that she could never imagine God as her father because her father was abusive. She helped me to learn that God is not like our fathers, but our father should be like God. A father's responsibility toward his children is to care for them, discipline them, and forgive them as God has loved us. On the other hand a husband's responsibility toward his wife is to love her and care for her as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

In baptism then, God becomes our dear Father, the friend who loves us most.

II. In baptism we are raised with Jesus to a new life.

Christ payed for every one of our sins on the cross. His death was the sacrifice for all of our sins. But the grave could not hold Him. He rose on Easter morning and lives and reigns with His Father in Heaven. Baptism connects us with the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Romans 6:3,4 Paul writes, "*Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore **buried with Him through baptism into death** in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*" In baptism we were connected with Christ's death and resurrection. Our sins were washed away; we were clothed with the righteousness of Christ; and we were raised to a new life in Christ. Just as He took our sins on Himself on the cross, baptism clothes us with His righteousness. In Ephesians 5:25,26 Paul writes, "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the **washing with water through the word.***" In baptism Christ cleansed us. Every single one of our sins was washed away, and we can live lives of hope, joy, and peace. We know Jesus as our Savior, and He knows us as His brothers and sisters in the faith.

III. Through Baptism, the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling in us.

He is called the Holy Spirit. He cannot live where the darkness of sin reigns. But where sin has been washed away, He finds hearts that become His temple, His dwelling place. In Titus 3:5 Paul calls baptism the "***washing of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit.***" It is the Holy Spirit who cleanses us in baptism and gives us the rebirth as the children of God. Baptism is not just a symbolic act. In it the Holy Spirit is working to drown our sinful nature, cleanse us of our sins, and give us the rebirth as the children of God. Through baptism He also takes up residence in us. Peter preached these words on Pentecost, "*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.** The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-- for all whom the Lord our God will call.*" (Acts 2:38,39) God's own Spirit dwells in us. He teaches us to run from temptation and to confess our sins when we have fallen into temptation. He gives us repentant hearts. He helps us to live moral and good lives. He pleads for us when we are so weak that we don't know what to pray. When we are asked to give a reason for the hope that we have in us, He gives us the words to say. The Spirit is a great gift of God because He points us to Christ and reminds us of who we are, the children of God.

The little formula that we use to baptize people, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” really says what our faith is all about. In baptism the Father receives us as His children, the Son clothes us with His righteousness, and the Holy Spirit makes our bodies His dwelling place. Today we thank God for those who have become a part of our fellowship by being washed in God’s name, and we pray that we will all treasure what a great gift that our baptism is.

Amen.

*Pastor Don Hougard
Benediction Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI
June 15, 2014*