

Our Baptismal Covenant

Revelation 7:9-12; April 10, 2011

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This week's message is called "Our Baptismal Covenant", and it was originally preached April 10 2011. Shortly after Linda Lamothe passed away, the scripture reading is revelation seven, nine to 12. After this, I looked, and there before me it was a great multitude that no one could count from every nation tribe, people and language standing before the throne and before the lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands, and they cried out in a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the lamb. All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne in worship God saying, amen. praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen.

Don Smith

Many of you know Lynn Anderson very well. He's been a wonderful preacher for many, many years. He co authored a book with a wonderful man, Dr. Darrell Gilbertson A number of years ago, and Dr. Gilbertson has a unique way of expressing his faith and I've, I've really been grateful for what he says he says, I tried to live out daily, my baptismal covenant. And when I first heard that, I thought, Oh, that's not language that I hear very often. In fact, even in our fellowship, you know, words like sacrament and covenant, we kind of relegate those words to Old Testament, but they really are wonderful words, the depth of the meaning of living out daily. My baptismal covenant is a unique expression. In our Bibles, you would probably pick up your Pew Bible and they'll say, Holy Bible, and then if you open up, it might be Say Old Testament. And then when you get to Malachi as you enter Matthew, it'll say New Testament. Well, Testament is a word that we feel pretty comfortable with. But another word for that is covenant. There was an old covenant that was made to the people years ago. And then because of Christ, there became a New Testament New Covenant. And that covenant is all built around Christ, His life, but specifically his death, and his burial and his resurrection, where he came out of the grave, to say to all the world death has been defeated. Death no longer has its grip around us, the last enemy To be destroyed his death First Corinthians 15:26, and Christ conquered death. And so because of all of that we read these wonderful scriptures that Jesus reminds us of I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will never die, even though they will die, they won't ever die. And we start to get that our body physically dies, but we continue to live on. That's the new sacrament, the New Testament, the New Covenant. And so when Dr. Gilbertson says, I try to live out daily, all the ramifications of what it means to live out my baptismal covenant, or sacrament. And baptism throughout the New Testament is a fairly common thing that takes place. In fact, Paul Paul spends a lot of time talking about communion Lord's Supper Eucharist, if you will, and also our baptism and how both of those things all center on Christ, and then align comes down his death, his burial, His resurrection, and then align comes down and a big letters it is for us. I mean, it's amazing. It's not just theology, it is to live it out on a daily basis. So I kind of want to do something a little bit different today, and just sort of work our way through some of the New Testament writers and what they said about all of this, because it seems to be hidden behind all of their words. They're saying what Darrell Gilbertson says I just kind of want to live out all the ramifications of my baptismal covenant, my relationship with Christ, and how everything centers on

Christ, and it's such a positive thought, for example, Peter gives us these wonderful words. You are a chosen person, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you might declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His glorious light. So you can focus on two things. Number one, that's a pretty positive thought.

I mean, I, I know you've heard me say this before, but if we really believed some of the Scriptures, and what they have said to us, and what they are saying to us, I mean, the top of our heads are gonna explode, aren't they? I mean, you stop and think about that. All of a sudden, God who created everything says to us, through one of his people, you and if you're like me, I'm doing this you Me, you are a chosen person. That's hard for us to really get our head around all that isn't it? least it's for me. You got the wrong guy, sorry. Somebody else, you are chosen person. You are a royal priesthood. You are a holy nation. You are a person, people belonging to God, so that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His glorious life back to Christ again, New Covenant It's all because of him and then him through us and he's asked us, as Darrell Gilbertson says to live out daily, all the ramifications of having one foot on the earth and one foot in heaven. May Your will be done on earth. Help me again, just as it is in heaven. So if you really do believe that you're living on the Earth right now, and I hope you do, then you also have to believe that there is a heaven. And what's happening in heaven, is what God is controlling, just as he pours himself out into our lives. Okay, so here's some, here's some rambling today. Here, just listen to an older middle aged guy, just spend a little bit of time talking about how often New Testament writers talked about this. It all centers back to this new covenant Christ in all that it means. So I'm not going to spend time in the gospels, but I just want to quickly go through some scriptures and you can write these down and you can look at them as you have time choose choose your own because I'm just picking a few of these things. But, but Romans one talks about that. Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, because it's the power of God for salvation to everyone, first for the Jew, and then for the gentile. For in the Gospel, our righteousness from God is revealed from first to last. Just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith. That's a deep rolling, theological expression. But what I see when I read that is what John read to us this morning from Revelation. Here's John Hildebrand reading what John the apostle saw. And what he saw was multitudes from every tribe, from every country, from every language, every gender, every race, he sees them all together, and there are so many of them, but he can't count them. But they're all together for one Reason, and one purpose, lived out their baptismal covenant. It's Christ, who has brought them to this place, and John gets a glimpse of our future. Even though we're here on the earth, He sees something quite profound. And so Paul, let's this church in Rome know all of this, and Rome is a unique letter. This is a little side theology, I guess, because a lot of the New Testament was written specifically for Jewish people. Jesus was a Jewish person, apostles were many of them and, and so forth. And so the Gentiles came secondary. I'm not ashamed of the gospel, it's the power of God for salvation. First, for the Jews, then for the Gentile. So Christ came and preached it. On that day of Pentecost when 3000 people were baptized, they were Jewish people who gathered from all around the world and then the gospel started being preached. And it was to all of the Gentiles. And that's you and I. So it's a good thing that the gospel was preached to Jew and Gentile alike. And here we have the scene of, of everyone being part of it all. So I'm not ashamed of it. And so what Paul is saying, You Gentiles, need to accept all of the Jews who had the gospel preach to them first.

Now, I don't know if that does anything to you. But for me, after years of being in the Scripture, I go, Well, that's pretty cool, because it's usually just the opposite. Now, you Jews, you've always been God's

people and you still are God's people through Christ Jesus, you need to learn to accept the Gentiles. Now in Romans, he said, Now you Gentiles need to accept these wonderful people who have followed the old covenant and now you're living out the daily expression and ramifications of your baptismal covenant. And it's not just for you, it's for everyone. It's all by the grace of God. That's pretty good news for everybody to enjoy. And so Paul continually talks about this. First Corinthians chapter 15, writing to an entire church full of people, some of whom did not believe in the resurrection. And Paul is questioning that. How, how is it that you have faith in Christ, if you don't believe in a resurrection? He was raised from the dead? Well, what kind of faith is that that really isn't a faith. And so he reminds them now brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of this gospel, which I preached to you what you believe that what you've taken your stand by this gospel, you're saved. If you hold firmly to those things, I preach to you otherwise you believed in vain for what I received from the Lord. I passed to you as first importance, and here is the gospel, that Christ Jesus died for your sins, that he was raised again, and that he appeared to many following his resurrection. That's the gospel. Sometimes the gospel has been watered down to mean just about anything. Paul makes it clear. The gospel is the death, the burial and the resurrection of Christ Jesus. And that's why Paul spends so much time talking about our baptism and communion. For example, not First Corinthians letter First Corinthians chapter 10, and chapter 11 talks about communion, living out your communion covenant. We're gonna have communion in just a few moments. We take that little bit of crack And we drink that little bit of juice. nothing magical in that at all. But what that represents is back to Christ again. His death, his burial, His resurrection, that cracker representing his body, that juice representing his blood, but it's not just his death, because there would be no hope after that. No, it's his death and his burial and his resurrection.

So we live out our communion covenant, at the same time as we live out our baptismal covenant, because he talks about this constantly. He did enrollments, and he does in Colossians. Don't you know he says that as many of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were buried with Him in baptism. into death, in that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too should live a new life. That's the gospel, being lived out and expressed in our baptism, and our communion expression, and we live our life with this joy. And this hope that even though there are sad times, Linda has passed from this life to the next. But we know that she's more alive now than she ever has. You and I will follow the same process. And eventually we will all be together united as John read enrollment and Revelation, we see this picture that is beyond description. I hope this isn't too boring because I just don't know how life can be any more. emphatic and structured and pointed and find his arms have never left us. And if it's, if it's almost too complicated, it's probably because it's so simple that we go it just, it just can't be.

I'm not a baker, I'm not a cook. I don't know anything about it. I try to avoid the kitchen as much as possible, but I'm lured in sometimes. And if I ever have to bake anything, I'm so grateful for instructions. But I noticed recently that when you want to bake stuff, it usually calls for an egg. It's kind of fun, you know, cracking an egg and doing all that kind of stuff, never thought too much about it. And then I got reading an interesting article that happened in the past about one of those cake companies that basically said you don't have to do anything. You just add water. And it didn't sell. Because people said that's too good. That's just too easy. I just add water. I don't think it's gonna taste very good. And all the testing that went into these cakes beforehand said, taste great. didn't sell. People just don't believe that it's that easy. I gotta do something. So I'll throw in an egg. Okay. thing all that to say that sometimes the gospel is called good news. Because it really is. What do I have to do? And this is when the arguments

start to happen. What do you have to do? You have to know here's Christ, who loves you more than you love yourself. He is the new covenant. He is your life. He's given himself completely and totally to you and for you. Not a moment in your life where he's left you. Maybe you've left him for a while. He's never left you. He's been there. He knows. He's poured himself out into you. And so we do what Darrell Gilbertson says I just kind of want to live off the daily expression of my baptismal covenant. That's why baptism is really a wonderful expression of, of our faith in the one who saves us who rescues us, salvation means rescued. And so behind our curtain, some churches don't have curtains, some churches don't have baptistry some people baptized in the lake and all that sort of thing. It's just this wonderful expression of of going into the water and coming out of the water saying I'm clean. Not because what I did, all because of him and when we have our communion. It's not look how good I am. I can take this communion. Oh, and nobody thinks that. It's, it's, I'm ingesting everything. Life itself. We're Christ makes sense of life and death and after death and life eternal. He brings it all together all of the cosmos, everything. He pulls it all together. And if there's ever scripture in the Bible, that just gives me goosebumps every time I read it. It's Paul, who I think wrote prolifically to keep trying to convince himself that what he's saying is more than true, and he's got to share this. He just got to keep sharing it. It's just too good and he keeps sharing it. talks about being blessed with every spiritual blessing. Now to him who was able to give you immeasurably more than you can ask or imagine, according to His power that now is that work within you, to Him the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout every generation forever and ever, and that he can't stand himself. He goes, Yeah, he doesn't he says, amen. But that's the new phrase. Yeah. It's a yes. That's what the word amen means. Yes. So be it. Yes. It's victory because of him.

And then he says this. But when the kindness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ appeared, he saved us. By righteous things we have done that by His mercy. He saved us by the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom he poured out On Us generously through Christ Jesus. So that having been justified by His grace, we have hope of eternal life. And these words are excellent and trustworthy and true. And I want you to emphasize these things. It's just Paul reiterating, here it is all because of Christ. And so when Peter first started preaching the gospel, death, burial resurrection of Christ, he said, repent and turn to God so that your sins might be wiped out. Listen in the times of refreshing my Comm. Be honest with me, and you certainly don't have to respond out loud. How many of us, even as Christians feel refreshed Because that's what he calls us to. It's a wake up call. For some reason, my baptismal covenant, my communal covenant is not giving me a refresh moment, spiritually. I gotta look at what's happening. Because it's Jesus, who has never left our side. Who is saying, Come on, come on. Now, we're not baptized every week, take a lot of time. But I would encourage you if you've never been baptized, to be baptized, for those of us who have, we know it's not us, but we also know there's something that happens that's pretty profound. That can't always be explained. It's it's this unique physical connection of just going in the water and coming up out of the water. But now it's the spiritual life that happens. But we do take communion every week. And in that communion, it is a refreshment. It is a reminder to live out daily, all the ramifications of what it is to live a baptismal covenant, good life. And he asks us to join him in all of this. And so when you do get to the last book of the Bible, in Revelation, there are all these scenes that show us the future and it's, it's amazing.

And I'll finish up one of my favorite scriptures in Revelation 12 that says, and they overcame, they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, and they love not their lives, even to the point of death because it didn't matter. To them, they were looking forward to the day when

there will be no more death. That's revelation 12 and verse 11. It's a profound passage they overcame by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony. And they did not love their lives, some version say, to the point that they even shrank from death. Now they, they had no problem in standing up in Rome, and saying, It's Christ, not Caesar, whom we follow. And so the Bible finishes in such a unique way. The last words of the Bible again, depending on your translation, will say something like this. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, be with all God's people. A man I really don't think we should read it like that. I think we have to read it like this. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with all of God's people. Yes. That's the way it's intended. Revelation is a book of victory. Because your chosen person, a royal priesthood, holy nation, of people belonging to God, that you might declare the praises of him, or call him out of darkness into His glorious light. And you live daily in that light, not because of who we are, but because of Christ, and then God pouring his divinity into us. And this is when we go. You must be talking about some buddy else. It can't be me. It can be you. You can be you. In fact, you is for us. That's the reason why there was an old covenant and then the new one that unites us, and brings us together. Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn. We walk together.

God is light. In Him, there is no darkness at all. If anyone claims to live in the light, and yet is walking in darkness, they're not living to the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship, watch this, we have fellowship, we have fellowship with one another. And you can't do that without making the sign of the cross. We have fellowship with Him and with each other Because we walk together, and as his arms are around us, one arm around him and one arm around each other. Because until the time comes that we can experience what Linda is experiencing. We have one foot on the earth, and we have one foot in heaven. We're at home. But our real home comes. Our real home comes when God says it's time. Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for everything for life. Help us to get through feelings of spiritual complacency. May we never use religion as an excuse for spiritual mediocrity. Help us in Not to get caught up so much in our own understanding that we forget to experience, refreshment, spiritual encouragement, light, life, joy, contentment, happiness, excitement. Help us to feel about ourselves, the way you feel about us. And then father, maybe even to the same or more degree, help us to feel about each other. The way you feel about all of us, we are your children. And we know how much we love our own children. And yet you love us even more. That is beyond beyond our understanding. We love you. And we want to live out daily, all the ramifications of our baptismal and communal sacrament. And it's all because of Christ Jesus, in his through his name that we pray, and all God's people said, Amen.

Adam Sandiford

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