

Baptism

April 28, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. This week's message is titled "Baptism." Thank you to Dave, Glynnis, Earl, and Don for being part of the video. The scripture reading is Matthew 28, 16 to 20. Happy birthday to Joanne S.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

I invite you to come in and take a seat and join us. It's good to hear the conversations among us. (Crowd Chattering) There are a number of announcements this morning and people to pray for. (Crowd Chattering)

Happy birthday to Helene, Jonathan. Jonathan, you have a birthday? How many, Jonathan? Three more days. Six, good for you. (Crowd Applauding) Oh, to be six again. (Laughter) Happy birthday also to Gloria and Barb and Kristen. Happy anniversary to Sherry and Ernie.

Wednesday night class when anxiety overwhelms. And we were invited, everyone's welcome to come to that at 7.30 to 8.30 for the next six weeks, I think. Talk to Paul for more details. Potluck, Sunday the 28th at noon. Speak to Janet for more information on that. Community service day is coming up. If we're interested in having a group of students assist you at your home, please get in touch and they address email and phone numbers up there. Coming up in a couple of weeks.

Prayer request, Olwen Belton has passed away. They were longtime members here for several years. In her 99th year. Pray for her family. Okay. Earl has let me know that Len is becoming weaker with age and he's got a few activities planned for Monday and Tuesday. But he'd welcome a visit after that this week coming up. We pray for Pam, for Olwen's family. For Marie, for Valerie, for Care. Marie's grandson, Brayden. Naida and Marfe are moving to BC. We pray for them and Helene's family getting settled in Halifax and they will be in our prayers also. We're happy to have Ella has announced and has been baptized. So we are sharing joy with that announcement.

Before we go to prayer, I'd like to read from Psalms 31, the first four verses from The Message. So it's not your translation that you're perhaps familiar with, but I think it speaks well. *"I bless God every chance I get. My lungs expand with His praise. I live and breathe God. If things aren't going well, hear this and be happy. Join me in spreading the news. Together, let's get the word out. God met me more than halfway. He freed me from my anxious fears."* Let's pray.

Father, we pray that our spirits may be lifted by your presence and your spirit among us here in this meeting. And as we praise you, help us to grow within us as we join together in worship. May all of our activities glorify you and may those we have mentioned, we bring their names and their activities before you in prayer. May we be united with Christ. It's our prayer in Christ's name. Amen.

Communion

Good morning. So many lovely faces to see. This morning John's going to be talking about baptism in his message and that made me think about my baptism, which was now a long, long, long time ago in 1986. And I studied the Bible with some friends and if anybody's doing the math, that was

38 years ago, and I was 27. So there's a little more math for you to do if you're curious. And I had always been a spiritual person, but I struggled with having my life match up with what I believed. And for those of you that know me a little more intimately, I really struggled with it. Lots and lots of struggle there to, in fact, honestly, if I'm honest with you, I gave up the struggle. I just did what I wanted to do. But when I started to study the Bible with some friends, some scriptures really reached out and touched my heart. And when I say my heart, I'm also including my mind. I'm a very cerebral person. I live a lot in my head. And although I knew that my life did not match up with what the scriptures taught, these were ones that just cut into my heart. And so I will wake up my phone here. So the first one was, and this wasn't really the first one, but it was, I arranged them sort of chronologically.

In John 14, 23 to 26, the scripture reads, "Jesus replied, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own. They belong to the father who sent me. All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." And then in Matthew 28 verses 18 to 20, "Then Jesus came to them and said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age."

And then Acts 2, 38, Peter replied, "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." And then Romans 6, 3, or 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. And then Romans 2 verses 2 and 3. And this for me was really what I needed. "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given to me, I say to every one of you, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment in accordance with the faith that God has distributed to each of you."

I listened to God's word. That brought me to an ever deepening faith as I began to understand how deeply God loved me and how he wanted me to love him back. I took a long, hard, soul-searching look at my heart, my motivations, and found they did not align with how God wanted me to live. But, and maybe you can relate to this, but I sinned so easily. Oh my gosh.

I needed quite literally a renewing of my mind. My mind just... (Pause) ...being God in my mind were this far apart, and it keeps going that way. It's not just like an arm's breath. It was far. And I knew I needed help, a lot of help, to come anywhere near the way God wanted me to be. I took my good decision to obey Jesus' command, to trust that as I participated in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in my baptism, that God would give me something that I didn't already have to help me. That's the Holy Spirit living in me.

38 years have come and gone now. I was terrified. I gotta tell you, I was terrified that I would not be able to live up to the commitment that I made. I was afraid. And I couldn't even imagine five years from then. Like that was forever. And now it's 38 years, kapow. They've come and gone. My children are grown, and they've got children of their own. One of them is with me this morning. My first husband died very suddenly, and I had to weather that storm. And I've been remarried since for actually longer than I was married to my first husband. But literally, the me that I was is a completely different me than I am now. As I look back, I see day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, and literally decade after decade now, God's Spirit, God's Holy Spirit, has prompted me to help me to work at my heart, to keep looking at my own heart and my own motivations honestly. And that has helped me to change the things that were so ugly and unlike the way that God's wants me to be. Now, not that I'm not ugly inside. Not that I don't sin, but I am 38 years down the road, a completely different person. And for that, I'm so grateful.

I still deep, deep, still dig, dig deeply into my heart. But for me, I am free. I am free of the chains that we sang about. I can change. I can. I've done it. I know I can. It's the truth. And I rise and I can rise as I choose, completely fresh with every repentant thought. Now, as a disciple of Jesus, I am actually teaching you. And I'm teaching you to obey. It's worth it. It's completely worth it. There's something different about living with the Holy Spirit inside of me who helps my heart to change. Honestly, it's the best life ever. Let's pray together.

Dearest Lord God, as we take the communion, God, with all of my heart, I am so grateful for your death, for the burial, for the resurrection, God, that not only was for Jesus, but God, it's for me too. And it's for all the people that I love. And I'm so grateful. God, as we're reminded of by the taking of the bread and the wine, and we certainly ask your blessing on our taking of it. God, please help us to have the faith to keep digging, to keep living faithfully, and to trust that by your Holy Spirit, we can change and live a transformed life. God, we love you so much. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Reading

Matthew 28:16-20

Glynnis made reference to our scripture reading this morning, and I would just like to say that, you know, as much as I've read this before, here I will make comment that you know the disciples when they see Jesus they worshipped him but they also doubted. Here we are this morning worshiping, and we're up and down sometimes. Sometimes we're hot, sometimes we're cold, sometimes we get it, sometimes we don't. But I'll begin reading in verse 16:

Then the 11 disciples went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him they worshipped him but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you. And surely I'm with you always, until the very end of the age."

Sermon

Baptism

Like in the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, there's something magical behind the curtain. And there's something magical behind this curtain. Actually, not very magical. I was a little boy, I always wonder, what's behind the minister? What's going on back in there? And it's a baptistery, it's like a small swimming pool. It's not very deep, pretty easy to move someone in the water, up out of the water. That's what baptism is all about.

For many, many years, at the conclusion of the sermon, if the minister did not offer and encourage people to be baptized, the sermon was considered incomplete. There was always an invitation for baptism. Baptism represents amazing things. It represents the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It also represents our own death, our own burial, and our own resurrection. Baptism represents it. It represents ourselves. Who knew we were in the Bible? But it's true. As Jesus died and was raised, one day, we will too. Many of our loved ones who've been so faithful over the years, the promise in scripture is that we will see each other again. As Jesus died, as I've said, and was raised, one day, we will too.

In fact, I guess it's so unique from Matthew right to Revelation, it's a constant throughout the words. For example, in the book of Matthew, as Jesus was returning to heaven after dying on the cross and was buried, and he said this, and he said this, even for us today, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. That's what Jesus said. And of course, it's true. Therefore, go and make disciples, Christians of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, help me, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We have within us God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. And sometimes we forget that. He's promised us, I will never leave you, I will never forsake you, I am always with you.

So the book of Matthew, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in these words, and I am always with you, even to the end. So then we can go through the entire New Testament if we wish. So many constant theme of baptism. In Mark chapter 16, 14 and 15, after the resurrection of Jesus, Jesus said to his disciples, "Go into all the world." Which makes me stop. What was it like 2000 years ago? How big was the world? Did anyone know there was an Australia? Did anyone know there was a Canada? Whatever, go into all the world. Just go into every place that you can go. Bring a message.

After the resurrection he said, "Go into all the world and preach the good news "to all creation. "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. "But whoever does not believe," and I'd like to think these words, "But whoever isn't interested "or whoever is, here's the message, but I don't want it." They're not gonna be baptized. The word condemned seems to be such a powerful, negative word, but it's baulking at God. God doesn't balk at us. He comes to us. And in our baptism, all of these things are taking place. In Luke three, John the Baptist said to the grout, coming to be baptized by him, and John the Baptist would baptize people, but his baptism wasn't about forgiveness of sins. It was just about, I wanna dedicate myself to God. And John the Baptist was a kind of powerful preacher. Excuse me, I'll just say his words. He said this, "You brood of vipers. "You brood of vipers." Not a nice thing to say. Produce spiritual fruit in keeping with your

repentance. Don't ask for forgiveness and then just go ahead and forget about it. It's all part of all of this.

So as the gospel started to be preached, there were all kinds of things taking place. Through the scriptures, we think of Paul and John and Paul and a variety of other people. Many of other people have gone out into the world to share the gospel. Not too many years ago, there were missionaries that went out into Russia, Australia and so forth, and they never came back. We don't know their story. Did they stay and preach and teach or were they, like Jesus, condemned for doing what they were doing? We don't know about all that. But we know that for us today, our baptism is so significant.

Let me share with you these words. I'm sure that many of you know these words, but I'll share them with you anyway. Let all Israel, that's where they were living at that time, let all Israel be assured of this, that God has made Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. And then when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and all the other apostles, so what do we do? Okay, we've never really committed ourselves, so what do we do? And Peter said these words, repent, ask for forgiveness, change your life, 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. In each of us, we have God the Father, God the help me, Son, God the Holy Spirit. And we have the scriptures that help us to understand all of this. Baptism is wonderful. It's the significance of death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but also living in this wonderful and powerful way. And even when dark days come, we can rely on the confidence of God in our baptism.

It's very interesting stories about this. And in Acts chapter eight, here's an interesting story. An Ethiopian, a gentleman who was an official in charge of all the treasury of the queen of the Ethiopians. This is not just a regular person, someone who's in charge of all the money of those days in Ethiopia, the queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem and he was worshiping. And on his way home, he was sitting in his chariot. He would say this, on his way home, he pulled the car over. He just pulled the car over, taking a break, taking a rest. And then what happens is, there's a man by the name of Philip. God says to him, somehow, God says to him, "Go to that car, go to that chariot, stay near it." And he goes with the question, do you understand what you're reading? Philip asked. And the man was very honest. How can I, unless someone explains it to me? He was reading the scripture, not just by coincidence. He was led like sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb before the shear is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

He asked Philip, the man does, "Tell me, who is this prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Ha, then Philip began with that very passage of scripture, told them the good news about Jesus Christ. And as they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the official said, going down into the water, I need to be baptized. And he was baptized. His life was changed forever, just like that. Just like that. For many of us who have been baptized, do you forget about your baptism? Oh yeah, I think I was baptized. I can't quite remember. No, no, no, we remember our baptism. It changes us. I remember saying to my sweet, beautiful Barb, I do. And I'm so grateful she responded in a positive way.

See, kinda with baptism, in our baptism we're saying to God, thank you, Jesus, thank you, God, thank you, thank you. Let's not forget our baptism and living up to our baptism, living our lives in

such a spiritual way. So there's the story of the apostle Paul, who at one point in his life opposed Christianity, but God grabbed him. Excuse me, the message of Jesus, he told the story. And a man by the name of Ananias shared the story of Jesus to Paul, and Paul himself was baptized. And from that day on, Paul was the one who writes most of the rest of the New Testament. Great teacher, great preacher, great missionary, as was Peter when he said these words, can anyone stop these people from being baptized? The answer is absolutely not, and why? Why would we ever wanna stop it? Let the waters roll over us, remembering it. It's just unique. Now someone says, well, what's the big deal? So you're standing in a baptistery, someone pulls you down and brings you back up, okay? It's a big deal. No. If it's not a big deal, then don't do it. The death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus, that's a big deal. And our baptism signifies that's a big deal.

We die in the sense of, yes, I've sinned. I'm brought down into water. I'm brought back up out of the water to live a new, wonderful life, remembering that God has said, I'll never leave you, I'll never forsake you, I'm always with you. And so when Paul is writing, he says, there's one body, meaning the church, there's one body and one spirit, just as you were called to one Lord in one faith, one baptism, one God and Father who was above all, in all, in all of us, and through all of us. And then again, when Paul is writing to the church at Colossae and speaking to them, going and chatting with them, he says this, having been buried in Christ in baptism, he's reminding them of their baptism, having been buried with Christ in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God who has raised him from the dead. Death, burial and resurrection, and when our death comes, we'll be raised with Christ. For all of us, it's more than just forgiveness of sins, how wonderful that is, but it's this relationship that we have with God, that God has always had with us, encouraging us to know him more and more.

So later, when Paul, sorry, when Peter gets in depth, he says this, for Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that's me, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body, but he was made alive by the Holy Spirit through him, through whom, and I'm not sure that I get this, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. And I have no idea what that means. I've read and read and read and read, all kinds of assumptions. I don't know that anyone knows what that means, but what happens next and what is said next, I do understand. He says, in it, in Noah's ark, in it, only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water. And this water symbolizes, what do you think? Baptism. It symbolizes baptism that now saves you also. Cool, just like Noah. Not the removal of dirt from the body, but it's a pledge of a good conscience toward God. And then he says this, it saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels, authorities, and powers, all in submission to him.

So it's a brief message today, but these words. (Sighs) John opens up the curtain. Then he says this, because he saw something. Then I saw a new heaven. And then I saw a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And then he says something unique. And there was no longer any sea. What's that all about? I think it's saying that the sea was not a nice place to be when the waters were rough and rugged. So he's saying, no, you don't have to worry about your boat collapsing anymore. You don't have to worry about your soul collapsing anymore. You don't have to worry about your anxiety overwhelming you anymore, because Jesus has said, "I am always with you. "I will never leave you. "I will never forsake you. "I am with you."

Don't mean to be weird about this, but I've been thinking about it all week. Picture yourself if you will, God sitting right beside you. And on the other side, Jesus sitting right beside you. And standing in front of us is God's Holy Spirit. Because the reality is that's exactly correct. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit with us. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I'm always with you. Our baptism reminds us of this. And then it says, "He who was seated on the throne said, "I will make everything new."

So my brief sermon today, my conclusion is brief. So what is the significance of baptism? Christ's death, Christ's burial, Christ's resurrection, as he lived, died and rose again, our baptism signifies death, burial, and resurrection. We've had many funerals in this place, but not to worry, we will be together again.

Closing

I'll just leave you with Paul's concluding remark in 1 Thessalonians. Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

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