

The Powerful Proclamation of Baptism

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Date: 30 August 2020

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[0 : 00] Hey, One Harbor, this is Jesse Kinzer, one of the pastors. Hey, so glad those of you who are listening to this online. Just so you know, I'm actually recording this in my bedroom on my iPhone.

We just had some technical difficulties on Sunday. The sermon didn't get recorded, but we wanted those who weren't able to hear it on Sunday not to miss out. We think it's a great sermon. We want everybody to hear it.

Before we jump into the sermon, I wanted to bring to your attention, again, those who weren't there to hear this, but our gathering space is just filling up, and we are quickly running out of room.

We had people standing on the walls, along the walls, just to make sure they could fit in, which is great. Sign of God's grace, that man Jesus is still building his church and adding to our numbers, and we're excited about that, especially in this time of pandemic.

And so one of the ways we want to alleviate and add some more seats so more people can come is by opening up more kids' ministry rooms. But in order to do that, we need kids' ministry volunteers, and that's where you come in.

[1 : 05] If you're not serving anywhere, man, we would love to have you as part of our kids' ministry team. It's an amazing team of people. And you might be thinking, what does that look like? Well, here's what it looks like.

It's simply serving, and it's not serving every single week forever. Man, you can say, hey, I can serve once a month. That is okay. We can take your serving at any level you can do.

It's going to go a long way. So now, if you want to let us know, hey, I want to serve, let us know by sending an email to info at oneharborchurch.com.

Just say, hey, I'm from the Havelock site, and I want to help out with kids' ministry. That will get back to us, and we'll be able to reach out to you. Okay, well, let's jump into it. Today, I want to speak about baptism.

This is going to be the first in a few sermons, and this series, what we're going to be doing is looking at a few means of grace that God gives us, gives to His church.

[2 : 02] And my hope is that we're going to see today, with regards to baptism, why it is so central to the Christian faith and to our practice as Christians, and that it isn't just a symbolic ritual, but that there's real power in baptism.

So let's start with this question, where does the practice of baptism come from? Why do we do it? Well, actually, it starts with Jesus, our Savior. Jesus Himself was baptized. And then He sent out His disciples to do the same thing, to baptize.

It says in Matthew 28, 19, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And Jesus sent His apostles into the nations to make disciples.

And what does He tell them to do? He tells them to baptize them, right? Right? He tells them to teach them and teach them obedience and all that. But He also says, man, baptize them. And that's what His disciples did.

They obeyed Him. In Acts 2, the first converts, the first people that got saved were immediately baptized. And that was no small feat, because there were about 3,000 people that got saved in one day, one sermon.

[3 : 10] Imagine that. Man, I would hate to have been the last person in that baptism line. That would have been a long, long day, right? But the apostles, they took Jesus' command to baptize disciples seriously.

And ever since, the church has kept this imperative, because baptism is a critical part of being a disciple of Jesus. But you know what? Many of us don't take it seriously.

I was like that. I grew up in church. My dad was a pastor. I was saved at eight. But baptism was never a big deal to me. And it wasn't until I was 16 that I got baptized.

And I only did it because someone started to disciple me. And they showed me that actually baptism is a big deal. But until that time, I was really indifferent. I had a lot of other stuff on my mind during my teenage years.

Baptism was not high on that list, let me tell you. But our job as the church is to elevate the things of God. And if baptism is taught and commanded by Jesus, then you know what?

[4 : 09] We have to do the same. And I am saying to you today, if you are a disciple of Jesus, you need to be baptized. But I don't want you to do it because, you know what?

I'm the pastor and I said so. I want you to get baptized with faith and expectation that baptism isn't just some silly ritual that you got to do to check off your box, your list of things to do as a Christian. It's a sacred moment. It is an important moment to you and to the church. Until you are convinced of this, baptism won't be worth the agony and the effort.

I mean, think about all the things you have to do to be baptized, right? You got to give a public confession of faith. Well, you know what, man, that's tough to do. None of us like speaking in front of crowds. You have to get dunked in front of everybody, which is a little weird.

You end up with wet clothes and wet hair and makeup, you know, running wherever, whatever. Potentially embarrassing, right? There are a million reasons to talk ourselves out of getting baptized.

[5 : 12] And if baptism is purely symbolic, we're going to find all kinds of excuses to procrastinate. You know, you might be thinking, you know what, Jesus has already done everything I need to to get into heaven.

So I'm going to skip the whole dog and pony show of baptism. And just like that, we can turn baptism from a command that Jesus gave us into an optional extra of Christianity.

And we can, you know, kind of console ourselves with this idea, after all, the thief on the cross wasn't saved. He was saved, but he wasn't baptized. But man, you can overplay that.

You can overplay that just that baptism is this symbolic thing and really strip it of any spiritual power. And what do I mean by that? How do we strip baptism of any spiritual power?

Well, man, we have to realize that there is an opportunity for God to do something in that moment. We have to see it as a means of grace. If you think about this, baptism is an act of faith.

[6 : 09] It's an act of living out our faith. And every action rooted in faith, what it does, it strengthens faith. I mean, baptism builds your faith and it builds the church's faith.

And I don't know about you, but think about this. Man, I get so deeply moved. I mean, to the point of tears. Every time I witness a baptism. Now, it's not because I'm emotionally unstable or there just happens to be a lot of dust in room at the time.

No, man, I am moved. It's more than that. That moment, what it does when I witness somebody getting baptized, it fills me again with the marveling at the mystery of salvation.

Which is the natural response when we witness people's confession of faith in Jesus. I mean, Colossians 1.3 says this. You know, Paul talks. He's writing to this church. And he says, man, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus. Man, Paul used that language a lot when he wrote to churches. Man, I'm remembering you.

[7 : 13] I'm thinking about you guys. I'm hearing about your faith. I'm remembering your confession of faith. And man, it just strengthens my faith. Man, it stirs me up. Man, it fills me with thanks and praise to God.

This is why we give a confession of faith at baptism. Confession, right, is just the act of saying true things. And that's what we're doing at baptism.

We're confessing what is true. But the beauty of baptism is that our confession is not just in our personal proclamation, our testimony of what Jesus has done for us.

It's also in the demonstration. And this is why the act of baptism is so powerful. Baptism itself confesses the mystery of salvation. You've heard the phrase, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Well, that's what baptism does. It speaks without saying a word. And here's what it's saying. Check out Romans 6, verse 3.

[8 : 17] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.

You know, at my baptism, I not only told people what Jesus did for me, how he saved me. I showed them what he did for me. You know, when I think back at that time, I'm a little embarrassed because my words weren't very eloquent or clear.

I wasn't full of confidence in trying to get across my testimony. It probably really didn't make that much sense to most people listening to it. Nobody came up to me afterward and said, hey, you really nailed that testimony.

But that's okay because you know what? I nailed the baptism part, right? The immersion part, I got totally right. When I went down into the water and came back up, it completed my confession. It said a thousand words that I couldn't find on my own. And this Romans passage, this passage we just read, man, it adds depth and color and light and beauty and revelation to this picture of salvation.

[9 : 37] And that's why perfectly sane people get into a pool of water with their clothes on in front of a bunch of people. Because Christianity is a confessing faith. That's what we do.

When Jesus saves you, it begins with this confession from your mouth that, man, he is your savior and he is your Lord and your king. And that you're a sinner and you need him.

But it also continues as a confessing life. And that's what baptism does. Baptism is this reinforcement of this confessing life. It's your confession.

It's my confession. It's our confession as a church. It visually proclaims the mystery of salvation.

And so what mysteries does this baptism reveal that we're looking into here?

Right? It says all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.

Right? That Romans 6 passage says that. What does that mean? It means that salvation joins you with Jesus's death.

[10 : 43] Salvation isn't becoming a better version of yourself. Right? I see bumper stickers that say, got problems? Try Jesus. You know, that's misleading. What it should say is you're the problem.

Run to Jesus. See, when Jesus saves you, when Jesus calls you to follow him, it is a call to come and die to yourself. It is a call to come and die with him, be buried with him in his death.

Now, on the surface, doesn't that seem like the worst sales pitch ever? Right? Not the best way to, it seems like not the best way to get converts.

Not the best way to win friends and influence people. But that's what Jesus does. That is the call to salvation. And this death he calls us to, it is spiritual. It's a death we can't see with our eyes, which means there's some mystery at work here that we have to unpack.

So let's explore why we have to die. Now, verse 6 of chapter 6 in Romans says, When Jesus saves us, it is showing us when we get buried with him, that picture of baptism showing us that we've been buried with Christ, it means that we die to sin's power over us.

[12 : 23] See, you and I are born with a sinful nature. Despite what your mama told you or is telling you, you aren't a perfect little angel. You weren't born a perfect little angel.

We, everybody here, everybody listening to this, we have a bias towards sin. Sin is simply not being who, simply, sorry, let me try that again. Sin is this.

It's simply not being who God created us to be. God created us to love and obey and worship him alone. A sinless relationship with God is him as Lord and us as servants.

And sin's power, what it does, it distorts this by refocusing our love and our obedience and our worship, and it focuses back onto ourselves. We love ourselves more than God.

We obey ourselves. I'm responsible to no one but me, right? Or we worship idols of all kinds that feed our desires and our pleasures, sex and money and power and leisure and entertainment.

[13 : 31] We place those things above God. You know, in America, this is celebrated as liberty and freedom, and it's in our DNA. We grow up in a culture that inculcates this into us right from when we're born.

The rights and freedoms of the individual is exalted above all things. Now, I love our nation. I think the freedom of opportunities we have is a great thing.

But, man, at the same time, let's not drink the cultural Kool-Aid. No one is truly free. Every man is in bondage to a sinful will.

Every man is in bondage to sin. And the only chance, the only chance to break that is in joining Jesus in his death. In death, the body of sin we were born with is buried.

Sin's power over you is broken. Sin's power over you was broken. Now, I've had Christians tell me about some serious addictions in their lives that suddenly ceased when they got baptized.

[14:41] Isn't that amazing? Now, I can't tell you why that is. And I'm not really promising you that it's going to happen for you. It's not this formula that, hey, you know, make a wish, get baptized, and it's going to come true.

I'm just saying, all I'm saying is, man, let's not put God in a box. He can use a moment like baptism to bring deliverance if he wants.

And yet, even for my friends who never struggled with something like alcohol or drugs again after baptism, you know what? They still struggled with other sins.

It's not like they got baptized and all their sin problems went away. They never had a bad thought. They never wanted to do a bad thing ever again. No. They were still sinners and they kept on sinning.

It's just that sin's power was broken over them. So now what? If we keep on sinning, do we have to go and get saved and baptized all over again?

[15:37] Well, absolutely not. Because when we join Jesus in his death, we not only die to sin's power once and for all, we die to the law's authority over us.

Romans 7 verse 1 says, You know, when you're born into this world, this is what the Bible tells us. When you're born into this world, you are born into a specific covenant ordained by God. But this covenant isn't a covenant of grace. It's a covenant of works. And this covenant of works, God says this, to be righteous, you have to be perfect.

Not mostly perfect. You have to be perfect. No mess ups ever. And that's what it means to be righteous. Right?

That's what the Bible tells us what it means to be righteous. And that's the big question, this idea of what is righteousness? What does it look like to be good? This is the big question people have been trying to figure out forever.

[16:45] Because we've taken God out of the equation. And so now we've kind of dumbed it down to righteousness being whatever you want it to be. Everyone gets to decide what is good and what is evil for themselves.

Which is why what one generation calls good, the next calls evil. There's no unchangeable standard. But God's law is perfect. God's law never changes.

And God's law is good. It's like this umpire calling balls and strikes. Saying that's good and that's bad. And unlike man's shifting standard of righteousness, God's law never, ever, ever, ever, ever changes.

But here's the thing. God's law never changes you. All the law can do is command and condemn. It commands you to live to its perfect standard and it condemns you when you don't.

The law can't save you. It just stands against you as an accuser. Jesus said this in John 5:45. He says this to the guys that were all about trying to keep the law and being saved by the law.

[17:53] Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you. Moses. Right? He's talking about Moses who was the guy that he kind of the personification of the law.

He's referring to the law here. There is one who accuses you. Moses on whom you have set your hope. You set your hope on the law. You don't know. You're setting your hope on something that you think is going to bring you salvation, but all it's going to do is accuse you.

But then Jesus comes along and he institutes something new. And this is the beauty of salvation in Jesus Christ. We didn't just die to be set free from sin's power by joining Christ in his death.

We die to be released from the law as our accuser. God gives us an example of how this actually works out. The next verse in Romans 7, verse 2, it says, For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage.

And accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law. And if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

[19:09] You know, in the covenant of marriage, when any marriage ceremony, we have those vows, you know, till death do us part. And from birth, the Bible tells us that we are married into this covenant of works and law till death do us part.

Now, imagine that. Imagine, guys, being married to a spouse that points out your faults nonstop. That's what the law does. We are married to this thing that constantly is pointing at our failures and our faults and saying, You are not measuring up to the standard of righteousness.

Man, after a while of constantly being told how bad we are and how messed up we are and all that, we would want out. But you know what? Because you've died with Jesus in salvation, you are set free.

In baptism, when we come up out of that water, we are demonstrating and proclaiming all that we have left behind in the grave. It is a confession that sin has no power over me.

It is a confession that I am no longer under the condemnation of the law. And coming out of that water is signifying also that we have been raised into a new life.

[20 : 29] We've been joined to, we've been married to this new and better spouse. We've been joined to this new thing, which is so much better. We've left it behind, that old, ugly spouse behind.

It says this in Romans 6 verse 4, We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death in order that, 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.

Salvation joins you with Jesus' resurrection. This is what it means to be born again. You aren't just remodeled.

You aren't just a little bit of a nip and tuck, better version of yourself. You're a whole new creation. You're under this new covenant. You're born into this new thing, this covenant of grace instead of the covenant of the law.

Man, you're totally living a new way. Romans 7 verse 6 picks up on this again. But now it says, Now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

[21 : 39] We are not only baptized into Christ, we are baptized into the Holy Spirit. Now don't freak out. I know Holy Spirit baptism has its baggage because of people's mishandling, but, you know, we don't throw out a core part of salvation in order to clean up people's messes.

This resurrection life that we're joined with in Jesus is lived in the Spirit, and it's lived by the Spirit. We come out of death, leaving behind the power of sin and the condemning law, and we come into life in the Spirit.

Ephesians 1 verse 13 says, In Him, in Christ, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, what happened to you? It says, You were sealed. You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. Now, I want to hone in on that word sealed because it carries some weight. See, in the ancient world, kings sent out edicts and laws to be read and proclaimed throughout their kingdom.

And this would be written on parchment, or it would be written on stone, and it would be marked with a king's unique seal.

[22 : 55] And whatever he declared on that letter, whatever he declared on that letter that was sealed, or that tablet of stone that had his mark of seal on it, was binding and permanent and unbreakable.

And it had the full weight of authority and power of the king and his kingdom behind it. This new life in Christ is not only a new way of living, it's a totally new identity.

The king, Jesus, has issued a new proclamation over you, and it is written on your heart, according to 2 Corinthians 3. As Christians, we confess this, and we believe it in faith.

Baptism, man, is the sealing of the Spirit on us. It's this freedom proclamation. It is our king's proclamation that's tattooed on our hearts, sealed by the Holy Spirit.

And here is a sample of what it says. Here's a sample of what it says. Romans 8, verse 1 to 4, it says, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[24 : 00] For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do.

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

You walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh.

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Man, think about that, guys. All the things that I've said so far, that is written on your heart. You are sealed in the Spirit.

[25 : 02] That thing is binding. All that has been said over you and about you is permanent, unbinding, carrying the authority of King Jesus. No one can undo that. No one can unbreak that.

Let's read on what else it says. What else is written on your heart, sealed in the Spirit? It says this in 15, verse 15.

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba, Father. We have this intimacy with God.

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs. Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

So much of what we read in the gospel, when we pick up the word and we read it, man, those things are, is what has been sealed on our hearts.

[26 : 08] That's what happens at salvation. That is the mystery that baptism is revealing. We are marked. We are sealed in the Spirit and all of the things of the gospel.

All that we are, our identity in Christ, all that he says about us is true. And when we look into his word, man, it says, man, that truth, that gospel truth resonates with our spirit.

It says yes and amen. And what we're doing is when we look into those things, all we can do is say, yes, we agree, Lord, because you have written that on us and you have sealed it, Lord.

And it is so true. But here's the reality that the proclamation, this proclamation over us, this edict, this letter over us is power only if we know it and if we believe it and if we don't forget it.

And I want to ask those of you here today, maybe you're not a Christian, I want to ask you, do you believe it? Do you believe that Jesus is your Lord and Savior?

[27 : 12] Do you believe that he died for your sins? Maybe today's the first time you believed. Well, confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior, get baptized.

That's my encouragement for you today. Maybe you're hearing this, maybe you do believe. But you know what? You've neglected this great salvation. You know, sometimes we can just grow cold to the familiar.

The gospel can become like that. We get busy, we put it to the side, we don't look into the marvelous mystery of salvation anymore. And things like getting baptized or reading the Bible or prayer, these means of grace, they just become optional extras in life.

But Hebrews 2 verse 1 warns us, Man, guys, if there's any warning, we have to be intentional about holding fast to our confession.

We have to be intentional about being a confessing people. That's what we're called to be. And we must pay close attention to the gospel written on our hearts, sealed in the spirit.

[28 : 27] I want to say this. If you're a Christian and haven't been baptized, Sunday, September 13th, we're doing baptisms here at the Sunday service.

Man, don't put it off. If you're ready, you want to get baptized, man, reach out. You can email us online at info at oneharborchurch.com.

Just say, hey, I want to get baptized. We'll reach out to you and we'll talk with you and make sure we could do that. Thanks for listening. Thanks for tuning in, guys. Love you so much.

Let me just say a quick prayer before we end. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this great salvation that you've given us. And I pray for my friends listening to this, Lord God, that they would be stirred in their faith.

Lord Jesus, this is a time where, man, it's so easy to not even engage in Christian community and come. And we're reminded that we're a confessing people. And we confess to one another, which means we need to be around one another.

[29 : 25] And I pray for my friends that maybe they have to be isolated at home because, man, it's just too dangerous for them to get out and about. I pray that even in their small settings of isolation, maybe it's a spouse to a spouse or families, that there could be times where they confess this great salvation to one another and encourage one another in that.

I pray for my friends that have just kind of chosen to tune in rather than show up in person, even though they can. I pray that they would be reminded today that, man, being in person is so great. It's so good. It's so necessary for building up our faith that we need one another. And I pray for my friends that are maybe thinking about getting baptized. They put it off for baptism off for a long time

and haven't really seen it as a necessary thing.

I pray that they would be encouraged to be confident and bold and step out and make that great confession of baptism that's coming up. And so I pray this all in your name.

Bless them as they go about their week and protect them and all that they do. Amen. Amen.