

Radiant Church, June 5, 2016
Mike Rydman

Why Does The Baptism of Jesus Matter to Us? 1 Peter 3:18-22

I was struggling and on Friday asked the other leaders to pray for me. I wrote this sermon four times this past week, and realized I had great theology for you...and nothing more.

In my Bible reading and prayer this past week, the Holy Spirit has revealed some things to me, about me, that are hard:

I settle. I settle for what is, because I don't want to be disappointed.

I don't dream of or envision anything more than what I can see, because I'm somehow convinced I'm asking too much of God.

I don't like leadership pain, so as of right now our church is only able to grow and mature to the level I think I can handle pain and loss.

And...I do the leadership things I enjoy doing, while procrastinating or avoiding the things I don't enjoy because I'm not good at doing.

Meanwhile, I intended this week to talk to you about why Jesus got baptized... Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.

The 4 Gospel accounts agree that the baptism John the Baptist offered was a baptism of repentance. He proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was at hand and that God's people should prepare for the Lord's coming by a renewal of faith toward God.

For John the Baptist, preparing for the Lord's coming meant confession of sins, repentance, and practicing righteousness. Baptism was intended to show a person's commitment to just that.

That being so, why was Jesus baptized? If Jesus was sinless, as the New Testament tells us, why did he submit to a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins? The 4 Gospels give us answers.

The Gospel of Mark presents the baptism of Jesus as a necessary preparation for his period of temptation, his ministry, and his death. Mark intended to show that God approved of Jesus for the fulfillment of his purpose.

The Gospel of Luke passes over Jesus' baptism quickly, placing it alongside the baptism of others who came to John the Baptist. Luke saw the baptism as Jesus' first step in identifying himself with those he had come to save.

The Gospel of John does not say that Jesus was baptized but does say that John the Baptist saw the Spirit descend on Jesus. John the Baptist told people Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice, for all the people, waiting to happen

John 1:29 as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”
The sense of Jesus as the one who bears the sins of the people is obviously in view in John’s Gospel.

In these three Gospel accounts it is clear that the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at his baptism to set him apart to do the work of God. All four Gospel writers saw that Jesus had been anointed by God to accomplish his mission of bringing salvation to the people. The salvation of the people would be dependent on His sacrificial death and the triumphant resurrection that followed.

The Gospel of Matthew’s account of Jesus’ baptism has more detail than the others...

Matthew 3:13-15 *then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me? But Jesus answered him, Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he consented.*

John was reluctant to baptize Jesus. John was persuaded only after Jesus explained to him that the act was “fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Jesus’ baptism was necessary to accomplish God’s will. And Jesus was publically aligning Himself with “all righteousness,” with God the Father.

The Apostle Peter also wrote of Jesus’ baptism

In **1 Peter 1:11**, he calls the gospel “... *the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*” That’s his gospel shorthand! Peter says, The glory of Jesus came through the suffering He was willing to endure.

When it comes to being a Christ follower there’s a legalist notion, and there’s a liberal notion, and then there’s the Christian reality. The legalist notion is, “Once you become a Christian, now your life is all put together. Once you become a Christian, now you don’t have moral problems. Once you become a Christian, you’ve got it all covered, and you look good to other people.”

The liberal notion is, “Now that you’ve become a Christian, you live pretty much like anybody else. You do pretty much like anybody else, but now you’re forgiven. You’re totally pardoned.”

But Peter tells us, instead, the gospel gives you freedom, even joy when you repent of your sins. In failure and in repentance you get closer to God if the gospel is your basis.

Let’s take a look at the passage where Peter talks specifically about baptism...

1 Peter 3:18 *for Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,*

We see first of all a clear gospel statement: Jesus suffered, his suffering was enough (it satisfied God's wrath against our sin), his death allows us to get close to God as beloved children. We are given a new composition. We are made alive in the Spirit of Jesus.

1 Peter 3:19-20a *in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison because they formerly did not obey,*

So what is that supposed to mean?

People who choose to continue in their unrepentant sin are like prisoners, held by their sin, with no hope of release. Jesus was the herald of righteousness. It continues...

Peter must have been impressed with Noah, because earlier in 2 Peter 2:5 he calls Noah a herald of righteousness...

1 Peter 3:20b *when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.*

Why does he want to bring up Noah? Because of this: the phrase 'brought safely through water ... Noah was saved through water.

You see what Peter is getting at? When the great flood waves of the troubles of this world hit you, you have to climb into Christ by obeying him. Don't be like the disobedient. Be like Noah. What does that mean? If you understand the gospel of grace, you climb into an ark. Jesus is that ark. Peter then goes so far as to say exactly what that means, like he's saying, "How do you publically climb into Christ? It's by baptism."

1 Peter 3:21-22 *Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*

Peter actually says, "I don't mean by that the physical thing the water does. I don't mean the water on your skin. I don't mean the water in the removal of filth." He says, "It's not baptism that saves you, it's the appeal you make to God." Jesus got baptized in order to "fulfill all righteousness," to make public His life's motive and direction, all of which aligned with God His Father.

Peter calls it the appeal, like a pledge that arises from a good conscience." That's a very significant phrase. When you get baptized, what saves you is not

the water on your body, but it's the appeal, the statement, the pledge to live in your new identity.

A pledge is a covenant, but it's a covenant that arises out of the fact your conscience is now clean. You've heard the gospel, and you realize your sins are forgiven. Because your sins are forgiven, you commit. You don't commit to get your sins forgiven. You commit because your sins are forgiven, and it's the gospel and faith alone in the gospel that saves you. The gospel tells us that.

Baptism says, I now stop searching for peace and rest in anyone or anything but God

While I was again re-writing this sermon for you, the Lord unexpectedly gave me this...

Mathew 16:24-25 *Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

Baptism is a public way of showing that someone is willing to die to everything they think they want, everything they think is important, in order to be aligned with God. It's the first public thing Jesus did. For us, baptism is a sign that a person is now a new creation in Christ.

What I say next I say not to judge or condemn, or make anyone feel bad, but because I love you, and the Holy Spirit wants me to feel some pain in doing so...

I'm concerned I haven't led us to be willing to die to ourselves, because I haven't necessarily died to myself, and we may really all want nothing more than a nice church to attend full of nice people to be friends with. We've all become comfortable with a church that doesn't ask too much of us.

I'm concerned that when we post on Facebook about our gospel communities, it's all about what time we'll meet and what we're going to eat.

I'm concerned that what gets us each most excited is the next fun thing we'll get to do. We may be content to tithe our time and money to our own entertainment.

I'm concerned that we've adopted the legalist notion of just looking good for each other, and the liberal notion that we don't have to be changed at all. We might be guilty of playing loose and fast with the forgiveness we have in Jesus.

I'm concerned that I (or on occasion someone else) prepare sermons and preach to you each week expecting your lives to be changed by my speaking skill, and apart from the Holy Spirit leading us to make hard changes.

I'm concerned that we're using the "We're a new church-plant" as an excuse for not being willing to mature as disciples and as a church that makes disciples.

I'm concerned for me, and for you...that we may not be living up to the appeal we made to God at our baptism. We may be asking Jesus for a better, improved life, instead of the death of all that in order to be completely aligned with Jesus.

Jesus didn't get baptized to announce to the world that He was the "Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world" just so we could be comfortable, and rich and entertained, and religious.

Jesus was baptized because He wanted to "fulfill all righteousness." That righteousness meant he had to be willing to suffer and die for us. The gospel tells us we will only live, truly live, when we are willing to suffer and die. Baptism is a picture of the gospel, an announcement that we are willing to die so we can live a new, transformed life.

Acts 2:37-39 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?" 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. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

Jesus was baptized because He believed. For any of us to be baptized is to say we believe.

I repent from settling for lesser things. I settle for what is, because I don't want to be disappointed.

I repent that I don't dream of or envision anything more for Radiant Church than what I can see, because I'm somehow convinced I'm asking too much of God.

I repent from my fear of leadership pain, so as of right now our church is only able to grow and mature to the level I think I can handle pain and loss.

And...I repent of only doing the leadership things I enjoy doing, while procrastinating or avoiding the things I don't enjoy because I'm not good at doing those things.

As Radiant Church, and as your pastor, we need to repent, and believe.