

**Sermon Study Guide Based on  
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of November 22, 2009  
"Baptism – Immersed in Christ"**

**[Today's message takes us deeper into the meaning of baptism and our relationship with God – even if we were baptized many years ago.]**

**[Topics: Baptism; Immersion in Christ; in the Name of Jesus; Ministry of Reconciliation]**

**Excerpt:** It's a joy to participate in a baptism – to participate with Father, Son and Holy Spirit, welcoming someone into the family of God. This sermon will take us deeper into the meaning of baptism and give some new insights into the thinking of our denomination about this subject.

When we baptized Kelly just now, we followed the pattern given by Jesus in **Matthew 28:19. "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."**

Most of you baptized in this denomination were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Probably most of you who were baptized in other denominations or congregations were as well, if it were a Christian church, because that is the custom.

You know, sometimes we think baptism is just getting wet. But there is obviously more to it than that. First, let's look at what it means to baptize someone into the "name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit"

In our Thursday night Bible studies, we've been covering the Book of Acts and talking about how the apostles kept doing things in the name of Jesus Christ. And the authorities kept saying, "Don't preach in that name." That's because the name was important.

So when we get baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, it's not just getting wet. Something far grander than that happens, when we are baptized into his name. MARVIN R. VINCENT, D.D. Baldwin Professor of Sacred Literature in Union Theological Seminary New York writes about the importance of the name of Jesus in *WORD STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT*.

*The name, as in the Lord's Prayer ("Hallowed be thy name"), is the expression of the sum total of the divine Being: not his designation as God or Lord, but the formula in which all his attributes and characteristics are summed up.*

So the name of Jesus means that it's all that Jesus is. When we get baptized into the name of Jesus, it means that we enter into all the characteristics that Jesus is.

*It is equivalent to his person. The finite mind can deal with him only through his name; but his name is of no avail detached from his nature. When one is baptized into the name of the Trinity, he professes to acknowledge and appropriate God in all that he is*

*and in all that he does for man. He recognizes and depends upon God the Father as his Creator and Preserver; receives Jesus Christ as his only Mediator and Redeemer, and his pattern of life; and confesses the Holy Spirit as his Sanctifier and Comforter.*

So when we are baptized in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are literally entering into ALL that the Godhead is – the Father from whom everything flows; the Son, who became Jesus and came and dwelt among us and now sits there in the throne room as man and God; and the Holy Spirit, who comes to inspire us, to move us and to sanctify us.

Now when most of us were baptized, we probably didn't understand it at the time, we were baptized into all that God is. Let's look at Romans 6 beginning in verse 1. In chapters 4 and 5, Paul has been writing about our relationship with Jesus Christ. How we have been justified by Jesus; how he came to us while we were still enemies; how he reconciled us and drew us into a relationship with the Father; and how his grace covers all sin.

Paul then is commenting that some people are saying – that if I'm covered by grace for all sin, then it doesn't matter and I can go sin as much as I want and grace will abound even more. Paul answers this question in **Rom. 6:1**.

**"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2) By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"** The NKJV says, "Certainly not" and the KJV says "God forbid!" Paul is saying we can't go out and sin as we please because God will just show us more grace.

Paul says that's not what it's about. Sinning goes against God's heart. And if we've been brought into the heart of God, why would we want to go against his heart? Paul tells us that we have "died to sin." That means we don't want to live in sin anymore even though there will still be temptations that we will fall into. We weren't made perfect at baptism.

**3) "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"** Paul doesn't mean this just symbolically. All humanity went with Jesus when he went into that tomb. We literally died with him and through baptism we symbolize that. We were baptized into his death and what he did for us through his death.

**4) "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."**

When we're immersed in the water at baptism, we are buried symbolically into the grave. And when we are lifted out of the water at baptism, we are symbolically raised with Christ.

Baptism involves another person who buries you in the water and then raises you out of the water. You see, Jesus didn't put himself in the tomb. Kelly was put under the water by her dad. She was in essence, buried with Christ. Then her dad, Robert, lifted her out of the water, because Jesus didn't resurrect himself, either. It was God who lifted

Jesus out of that tomb. In the same way – we not only enter into his death, we also enter into his resurrected life. Jesus did that for all of us 2000 years ago.

Mark, Luke and Matthew talk about Jesus' baptism. Jesus got baptized, not because he was a sinner. He had no sin. Jesus got baptized for us. So when we enter into that relationship with God we are already baptized. But God wants us to come and participate with that so that we know and all those around us know we've entered into what Jesus has already done for us.

In the past, we thought that we got forgiven when we went into the water. And when they laid hands on us, we got the Holy Spirit. Pastor Glen said he was very careful when he prayed over Kelly not to say, "Now bring the Holy Spirit to Kelly."

The Holy Spirit has already been working in her life and brought her to the point where she wanted to be baptized. The Holy Spirit now works more openly in her because she wants him too. So pastor Glen prayed that the Holy Spirit would bless her giftings, would bless his fruit in her life and show himself to her in a greater way.

Hold your place here in Romans and go over to **2 Cor. 5:14. "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died."**

This word "convinced" about what God has done for us is in many NT Scriptures. It's not "maybe" what God did for us. There's an excellent video on our denominational (GCI) website by Jeff McSwain, a youth pastor.

He talks about the weakness of both Calvinism and Arminianism, which are the two evangelical views of our relationship with God. And both of them ultimately cause people to feel that they are never sure about their relationship with God. Are they saved or not? They think they are, but what if they sin?

Notice what else Paul says here, "We are convinced that one died" – for some? No – "for all." Paul writes that we all died in Jesus Christ.

**15) "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."** Jesus now lives so that we can all enter into his life. Now when you were born and drew your first breathe of life, you were in relationship with the living Jesus Christ, whether you knew it or not. It doesn't matter. Now this doesn't mean that you were saved.

Now most choose to sin and ignore him. Jesus will work with that over time. Scripture tells us that Jesus sustains humanity and the whole creation. God's desire is that we all come to live for him.

**16) "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer."** We should view all people as God's kids regardless of whether they know Jesus or not.

**17) "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18) All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and**

**gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19) that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."**

Now there are many in Christianity that say that God is angry against sin and is holding people's sins against them; that he's going to get you, that you will burn in hell or be left behind. There are many different ways to express this. Now either Paul is wrong or they are wrong.

Why isn't God counting men's sins against them? Because when Jesus died, we all entered into that relationship with him. Now there will be a time when we realize that we are going against what Jesus has done and now I want to enter into that. And so when we get baptized, we are saying that we acknowledge that we are willing to die with Jesus.

Now let's return to **Romans 6** once again. **5) "If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."** God is working in every single person's life out there, even though some of them are gang members, murderers and are doing horrible, horrible things.

God is still drawing them through the Holy Spirit. And one day they will respond and say, "Wow, I'm going the wrong way!" And all of you have had that moment in your life and could probably tell everyone what day that happened. It was like lightning struck you. And you suddenly realized that you weren't right with God. And you had the desire to change that.

**6) "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – 7) because anyone who has died has been freed from sin."**

Now the problem is we still are in the flesh. We still have our fallen nature telling us what to do. And many times we don't listen to Jesus. When we respond to the Holy Spirit, he will begin to change us. Some of the vilest people have had a major change when they respond to Jesus Christ.

**8) "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9) For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10) The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God."**

Jesus now lives to God and he has brought us along with him because we've been resurrected with him. **Ephesians 2:6** tells us that all of humanity have ascended into the heavenly realms with Jesus.

Even Revelation says that the punishment that comes upon those who refuse to respond is in the presence of God in his throne room. The reprobates never leave God's presence and his love. It's just that they stay with their backs turned to God, refusing to respond. It's not like God has some place called "Hell" that's out of his presence.

God is constantly drawing us into relationship with him. And the reason that those reprobate sinners, like you and me once upon a time, respond to God is because he is stirring us, but he will never force us against our will. He only wants us to cooperate. Once we come to the

place where we want to respond to God, one of the ceremonies he's given us to show that response is baptism.

Now when Jesus was baptized all three persons of God showed up. The Son was there – obviously as Jesus. Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit descended down from heaven like a dove on Jesus for his ministry. And the Father spoke and said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” God says the same thing to us because of Jesus. “You are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.”

Here are a few quotes from pastor Glen's class notes from his instructor, Pastor Jonathan Stepp. He said this about Jesus' baptism. *His reason for being baptized is to reveal to us who He really is – the Son in the flesh – and to reveal to us who we really are: human beings baptized into the Trinity.*

He continues: *Water baptism is a ceremony created by Jesus to establish a clean break in our bodies, minds, and souls, between the lies we are born into the world believing and the truth about ourselves that is revealed in Christ.*

Pastor Glen commented that he can still feel that moment when he got baptized. When he came out of the water, it was like a thousand pounds was lifted off his shoulders. Now did God suddenly lift something off pastor Glen's shoulders? No, Jesus had already done that.

But what happened at his baptism, his mind finally figured it out. Pastor Glen suddenly realized that he had been forgiven and what that meant. Our bodies respond to our baptism. Something has happened to us, because we get wet.

There's also something in our minds that recognizes that we made that choice to enter into what Jesus has done. The Spirit also knows that we've decided that we want to continue to walk with Jesus in a greater way.

Here's his definition of a “Christ-centered, Trinitarian” baptism: *Baptism is a ceremony, given to humanity by Jesus, which reveals to us the truth of how Jesus has immersed us in the life he shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit and how he has raised us up from death to life.*

So baptism is a ceremony where we can understand what it's like to live with Jesus in the trinity. But it happened 2000 years ago in the Jordan River, when Jesus got baptized for all of us. And Jesus chose to die before the Father and resurrected before the Father at his baptism in water at Jordan.

And then three and half years later, he chose to literally die, go into a tomb and be resurrected. Jesus had his baptism before symbolizing what he was going to do. We have ours after symbolizing what Jesus already did. Through baptism we join that.

Now pastor Glen has baptized teenagers at summer camp. But Kelly is the youngest person that he has baptized. She is nine years old. You see it's not about how old Kelly is. It's not about what Kelly understands.

It's about what Jesus already did for her and all that she's got to know is that she is entering into what Jesus already did for her. She's not the one that has to prove that she's going to be righteous the rest of her life. It's about Jesus' righteousness. Christ is taking care of her. The Holy Spirit is bigger than Kelly and he will take care of her.

That's why some churches can actually baptize babies, because they don't believe it's about the person. It's about Jesus and what he did. It's not based on did the baby repent. The parents are involved and ask that their baby be brought into what Jesus has already done.

Then at age 12, those who were baptized as babies, have to go through a process of teaching and catechism and be confirmed, which means you state that you understand what Jesus has already done for you and accept it.

In **Galatians 3:26**, we read, "**You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,**" Some translations say faith OF Christ Jesus. It's not our faith. It's Jesus' faith that he gives to us.

Repentance is saying, "I was going the wrong way, and now I'm going to turn around and acknowledge what Jesus has done for me and walk along in his footsteps." Doing things our own way involved sin. But following Jesus' way gives righteousness.

**27) "for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."** Now once we make the decision to enter into that relationship, we are clothed with Christ, meaning we begin to walk with him in a greater way. We begin to respond to what he's doing in our lives.

The old understanding has been dependant on us. Have you repented? Have you repented enough? Do you understand? How much is enough to understand? The bottom line is not about us doing enough or doing the right things to get baptized. It's about Jesus and what he did and us entering into that.

Most of us have been baptized years ago. Since then, we have continued to walk in what Jesus Christ has done for us and continues to do for us. And that means we don't have to worry about the future, or about what's next. We don't have to worry about whether we're perfect all the time.

This good news can help us all at Thanksgiving to be really thankful that it doesn't depend upon us. Yesterday pastor Glen was able to offer a prayer for Glen McCutchan, who is basically unconscious, with assurance that he is safe in Jesus Christ. We can say the same thing about others like Candace, who's also dying from cancer.

Pastor Glen's wife Connie received news that her 20 year old cousin that was involved in a car accident with serious brain and facial injuries. With technology they keep people alive today. We want that, yet if he pulls through, he will never be the same person anymore.

He'd be better with Jesus, instead in this life all banged up and miserable. People will say that this kid is only 20 years old and hasn't had time to live his life. But the choice really is this: he can stay here for another 50 years and suffer or he can be with Jesus

and enjoy eternal life. It seems to pastor Glen that the better choice would be – being with Jesus and not have to suffer in this life. But we want to hang to this life no matter what because we probably doubt Jesus.

When we were baptized into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we entered into all that God is. And when we're put in water we are just acknowledging what Jesus has already done for us. What a glorious thing.

Pastor Glen wishes all of us an awesome Thanksgiving – giving praise to God for the fact that we are secure in our relationship with him and that we are resurrected and ascended into the heavens through Jesus.

And we can also celebrate the physical things we have realizing that we may NOT be so prosperous 10 years from now if our nation continues down the road of recession and huge national debt. Would we still celebrate Thanksgiving if we become an impoverished nation?

Hopefully we're not thankful to God just because of our great physical blessings, because there are a lot of people on this planet who don't have these blessings but have Jesus and have entered into what he has done. Hopefully we will appreciate and thank God especially this Thanksgiving for what he has done for us.

**General Group Question:** What does baptism symbolize about our relationship with God?

**Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.**

1. Why would a person not want to live in sin any longer once he/she is baptized?
2. What makes it possible for a person to live a new life?
3. Why did Jesus get baptized since he had no sin?
4. Why do we need to change the way we look at people, following the example of Paul?
5. How does the ministry of reconciliation apply to all humanity?
6. How does being united with Christ in his death change our relationship to sin?
7. How does a person become "clothed with Christ"?
8. What are some of the blessings you will thank God for at Thanksgiving?