

I. Introduction

- A. Today is one of those special days in the life of our church. You almost call it a holy day, or even a holiday.
- B. Today is Baptism Sunday. Over the course of our 2 services today, we will witness baptism of over 30 men and women. Isn't that incredible?
- C. There is a book in the Bible called the Acts of the Apostles, or Acts for short. This book traces the beautiful and painful and messy stories of the very first generation of Christians.
- D. This is the generation that heard Jesus himself. They heard his apostles. And they were closely following the apostolic marching orders.
- E. For my summer series of messages, we are looking together at the amazing work of God.
 - 1. I'm calling this series **OUR TURN**.
 - 2. Because we believe that the Acts of God through his church didn't end, but God is still working through his people, the church.
- F. So because of our baptisms today, I thought it would be good to trace out what the Book of Acts tells us about baptism. So that's my talk today...
 - 1. Our turn to **BAPTIZE**.
- G. The early Christians baptized in the book of Acts, so now it's our turn to baptize in the book of Pathway.
- H. There are many places in the book of Acts where somebody is baptized. So let's race through them and piece together what baptism is all about.

II. Six Facts About Baptism

A. **The Requirement of Baptism:**

- 1. *"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."* (Acts 2:41)
- 2. So in this verse, a very large group of people were gathered in Jerusalem. A man stood up and Preached. He proclaimed the way of salvation.
 - a) That man was Peter, the way of salvation was through Jesus Christ.
 - (1) Jesus died for our sins and rose again.
 - (2) The sacrifice of Jesus is the doorway to salvation. Not being religious. Not being moral. Obeying God's laws.
- 3. Peter's message was very counterintuitive.
 - a) We think we reach up to God. But in Peter's message, God is reaching down to us in mercy and forgiveness and grace... all the time.
 - b) We think we are to earn our own salvation. But in Peter's message, salvation is a free gift.
 - c) And we tend to think that salvation is something that must be worked out over years of performance and behavior and religious production. But in Peter's message, salvation was a free gift for right now... Receive Jesus Christ and put your faith in him, right here, right now, today.
- 4. That message Peter preached is called the Gospel. When the gospel is preached, the listener has a very important choice to make. You will receive that gospel, or you will reject that gospel.
- 5. So the first fact we have to make clear is that the requirement of baptism is to receive for yourself the word (message) of the gospel... because that is a non-negotiable requirement before a person is baptized.
 - a) In the Bible, only saved people can be baptized.
 - b) Only saved people were baptized.
 - (1) You have to have a testimony.
- 6. You should know that every person we baptize has a person conversation with one of the leaders in our church. In that conversation, they give their testimony—they tell of the day they gladly received the word of the gospel and were saved.
 - a) That's the requirement of baptism.

B. **The Why of Baptism**

- 1. *"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:38)*
- 2. People get hung up on that word "for" there. For the remission of sins. For the forgiveness of sins. Is that saying that being baptized actually forgives a person's sins?
- 3. No it is not. That is because this verse is written in Greek, and the grammar here does not mean "for-dot-dot-dot" it means "in view of dot-dot-dot." Or "because of dot-dot-dot."
 - a) Be baptized because your sins are forgiven when you believe in Jesus.
 - b) Be baptized in view of this astonishing wonderful grace of God that you, a sinner are saved by grace through faith.
- 4. In view of that, let every one of you be baptized.
- 5. Baptism is a ritual.
 - a) It is symbolic.
 - b) Baptism is an outward symbol of an inward reality.
 - (1) The outward symbol is getting dunked in water.
 - (2) The inward reality is that you have repented... which means that you have completely upended your thinking about God.
 - (a) You've switched polarities...
 - i) from works to grace,
 - ii) from performance to faith,
 - iii) from salvation as a reward to salvation as a gift, so that

- iv) salvation has changed for you from a theory to a personal actuality.
- 6. Some people have the symbol, but not the reality. They're baptized, but they've never been saved.
 - a) Maybe their baptism means something to them... but God doesn't save people through baptism... so, I say this lovingly, maybe your baptism doesn't mean to God what you think it means to you... because more than anything else God wants for you, he wants you to be saved.
 - b) Baptism is an outward symbol of an inward reality; make sure that inner reality is rock solid, cemented in place.
- 7. Some people have the reality but not the symbol. They're saved, but they're not baptized.
 - a) If that's you, how about we fix that next time we offer baptisms. Sign up for that, okay?
- 8. But please don't miss that amazing, beautiful word: forgiveness. Do you realize that you can be forgiven? Forgiven by God for anything and everything?
 - a) Do you realize you need it?
 - b) Do you realize that if you have Christ, you have it?
- 9. Whatever wrongs you have done, God punished Christ for them on the Cross. And it would be unfair of God punished a sin twice. So that is why you have forgiveness.
 - a) God won't punish you for your sins.
 - b) God won't shame you. He won't berate you. He won't take away his love, and he'll never take away his salvation.
 - c) You have maximum forgiveness... for very sin and shortcoming and failure in your life, past, present, and future.
- 10. The gospel of Christ still offers the forgiveness of sins... and because of that, it's our turn to baptize.
- 11. When we stand in that water and are baptized, we are not saying that we are better, or that we are superior. We are saying that we know we have been forgiven, that is the why of baptism.

C. The How of Baptism

- 1. *"So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the Ethiopian official went down into the water, and he baptized him."* (Acts 8:38)
- 2. In every case where the Bible describes baptism, the people went down into the water for a full, very wet, very cold... dunking.
- 3. This is called baptism by immersion. We practice baptism by immersion because that is what we see in the Bible, in the earliest generations of the church.
- 4. What we are doing today stretches back two thousand years. We stand in a long line of believers who used rivers and streams, lakes and ponds, tubs and pools.... Sometimes in secret, sometimes in the open, but all the time immersing a person in water as a symbol of their immersion into Christ.
- 5. My name is Giovannetti. I am Italian. Among a lot of other things, that means that when I was a baby, I was baptized at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Chicago.
- 6. That was my parents choice. They made that choice because they loved me.
- 7. Years later, after I was saved, I was baptized again. That was my own choice.
 - a) The way I see it, the baptism my parents gave me as a baby was a kind of spiritual shove in God's direction.
 - b) And my own baptism as an adult was me actually embracing that direction and making it my own.
- 8. Which leads to...

D. The Who of Baptism

- 1. One of the most counter cultural aspects of baptism in Bible days is how it crossed lines people didn't cross.
 - a) Jews were baptized...
 - (1) **"Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household."**
 - b) Gentiles were baptized...
 - (1) *And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized."* (Acts 18:8)
 - c) Men were baptized....
 - (1) **"But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men**
 - d) Women were baptized.
 - (1) *and women were baptized."* (Acts 8:12)
- 2. Being saved makes us all one. Rich or poor doesn't matter. Nationality or citizenship doesn't matter. Social status doesn't matter. Status, power, employment, unemployment, family of origin, how high, how low, how famous, how obscure... all of that is wiped away when we come to Christ.
- 3. Right while Luke was telling the story of Acts, Paul was writing these radically counter-cultural words in the book of Galatians:
 - a) *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* (Galatians 3:28)
- 4. In that culture, those were fighting words.
 - a) Our culture is being torn apart right now. It's so sad to see.
- 5. Christ makes us all one, and the same baptism proclaims it.

E. The When of Baptism

- 1. *"And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized."* (Acts 16:33)
- 2. The "he" is a jail guard from the town of Philippi—the Philippian jailer. The men whose wounds he washed were Paul and Silas, key leaders in early Christianity and technically his prisoners.

3. Long story short, the jail guard brings his prisoners home, has them explain the way of salvation to his whole family and all his servants, he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and is saved, they all believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and are all saved.
4. And immediately they're all baptized.
 - a) No theology quiz to see how much they knew.
 - b) No morality exam to see if they were suddenly good people.
 - c) No repentance checkup to see if they had changed their ways hard enough fast enough.
5. None of that.
6. Immediately. No delay. As soon as we can pull it off, let's get baptized.
7. Just do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior?
 - a) Yes? Great! Let's get baptized.
 - b) And that was it.
8. There wasn't a big delay between when a person became a Christian and when they got baptized.
9. I didn't do it that way. I got saved as a kid, but I waited to be baptized until I was an adult. I don't recommend it that way. Once you're saved, and you're old enough to understand what it means, it's a good time to go public with your faith.
10. Next time we offer baptisms, go ahead and sign up.

F. The What of Baptism

1. "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 19:5)
2. This I think is the most important part.
3. I said earlier that our culture is being torn apart by our differences. But underneath that is this: *most people today have a broken sense of self.*
4. When they ask themselves the all-important question—Who Am I—so many people make a category error. What I mean is that they talk about something other than the deepest part of themselves.
 - a) I am not what I do for a living or for school.
 - b) I am not my sexual orientation.
 - c) I am not my gender preference.
 - d) I am not my nationality.
 - e) I am not my earthly citizenship.
 - f) I am not my financial situation or wealth.
 - g) I am not my addictions.
 - h) I am not my dysfunctions.
 - i) I am not my failures.
 - j) I am not my embarrassments.
 - k) I am not my successes or my wins.
 - l) I am not the things I'm proud of and not the things I'm ashamed of.
 - m) I am not my family of today.
 - n) I am not my family of yesterday.
 - (1) I do not diminish all these things, and I'm not at all saying they're unimportant. I am not denying that they heavily influence my behavior and my life. All those aspects of me are real and they are strong.
 - (a) But not one of them is the deepest statement of my identity.
5. Me... I'm talking about me, Bill Giovannetti.
 - a) Above all else, my identity is summed up on one word and only one word.
 - b) CHRISTIAN.
6. I am a Christian. And that glorious label, that transcendent identity, is the superseding, definitional, identity-creating, meaning generating, beginning, middle, and end of who I am.
7. Christian.
8. To be baptized is to declare an identity. It is to stake your sense of self once and for all on your union with Jesus Christ.
9. You are baptized *in the name* of the Lord Jesus. You are baptized *in the name* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - a) In the ancient world, the name carries the identity and to be baptized into his name is to be welded into his identity.
10. Baptism means "to be plunged into..."
11. When you are saved, at that very moment, you are plunged into... Jesus.
 - a) This is your spiritual baptism... and it is invisible. You are placed into permanent union with Christ.
 - b) This is a mystery, but at salvation you become one with Jesus.
12. So much so that...
 - a) his identity is your identity,
 - b) his nature becomes your nature,
 - c) his status is your status,
 - d) his riches are your riches,
 - e) his acceptance before God is your acceptance before God,
 - f) his royalty is your royalty,
 - g) his character his your character,
 - h) his love is your love,
 - i) his kindness is your kindness,
 - j) his grace is your grace,

- k) his everything is your everything.
- 13. Christianity is the great mystery of Christ in you and you in Christ.
- 14. I am Christian... and everything I say and do and think and feel in every category of life is meant by God to align with *that* identity—the identity of Christ—above all else.
 - a) My finances are to be Christian finances.
 - b) My morals are to be Christian morals.
 - c) My sexual ethics are to be Christian sexual ethics.
 - d) My everything is to be Christian... BECAUSE anything out of line with that contradicts my identity and makes me less than my truest self.
- 15. Like I said, identifying as a Christian above all else doesn't erase everything else. It just gives definition, and moral order, and meaning, purpose, and design to everything else.
- 16. When these men and women stand in baptismal tank, they are, in effect, shouting to the world, I AM A CHRISTIAN.
 - a) I may not be perfect in your eyes, but I am perfect in God's eyes, and will be forever.
- 17. When they sit down and prepare, they proclaim to the devil and the demons... give me your best shot... I AM A CHRISTIAN, and in Christ, I am more than a conqueror.
- 18. When they go under the waters, they are proclaiming to you and to me and their family and friends.... I AM A CHRISTIAN... I hope to live before you in the love of Christ.
- 19. When they are lifted out of those waters, they proclaim "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect," (Hebrews 12:23)... for all the saints whose names are enrolled in heaven for all the ages of the church, and for all the sinners who have yet to meet the Savior through their testimony, they are saying I AM A CHRISTIAN.
- 20. And when they stand and when we cheer, we are declaring to all the cosmos that we are one with them. One body. One faith. One baptism. One church. WE ARE CHRISTIANS. WE ARE THE CHURCH. And there is not one fact more important about us than that.

III. Conclusion

- A. So, now **it's Our Turn to Baptize.**
- B. We're going to pray. Our worship team will come up and lead us in worship, as we transition into a time of baptisms.