

Speaker 1:

Christ. Amen. You may be seated.

So today we are of course celebrating and remembering the baptism of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And also by of course extension, remembering our own baptism. Now, baptism, we've been talking for quite a while about the life of Jesus, his circumcision, the coming of the wise men, all of these events that took place early in his life and now we're into his older life, his adult life, and we are getting into the public ministry of Jesus. Immediately following his baptism, we of course have his wandering in the wilderness, his temptation in the wilderness, and then he goes out and he starts selecting his disciples. So this is the beginning of his public ministry. Now, why does he begin with baptism? What in the world is going on here with Jesus Christ? He's going out to John who is a prophet, the last of the Old Testament prophets.

I know he's written about in the New Testament and that's where all of his words are but he's really an Old Testament prophet because he prophesies about the coming of Jesus Christ. In fact, his main goal is to point directly to Jesus and says "This, is he the one who has come to take away the sins of the world. The one who sandals I'm unworthy to untie." Think about that. I mean, that's a pretty simple thing to do. Untie somebody's shoes. Pretty much anybody can do it. Any child could do it, any young child could do it. And yet John considers himself unworthy to even do that before his Lord. John understands the majesty and might of who this is, this person of Jesus Christ. And so he comes and he is baptized, and here we have the example of that. We hear and see the Trinity all together at one time.

We've got of course, the Son on the ground. We've got the Spirit descending upon him, and we've even got the voice of the Father up in heaven speaking. Now this happens again in the transfiguration where again, he is preparing not for his public ministry, but he's preparing for his final act of ministry, his death and resurrection. And again, we see the Trinity there as well. Now, it's interesting the words that are spoken, we already have heard before in our intuit in the Psalms, Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42, where it says, "This is my chosen one in whom my soul delights, and then you are my son. Today I have begotten you." These words are the words that we hear from heaven at his baptism and then similar ones again, of course at his transfiguration. So the prophecy, this is the one who is going to fulfill the prophecies of all of the Old Testament for us, and he begins it with baptism.

In baptism, he sanctifies all of the waters and he gives us the promise that we also are baptized. And because we are baptized like he was, we were baptized not just into his life but also into his death. And if we're baptized into his death, then we are also baptized into his resurrection.

Now, I don't know if you were paying close attention to the words of our first hymn, but I'd like to read the fifth verse from Hymn 596, "Oh Christian firmly hold this gift of baptism and give God thanks forever. It gives the power to uplift in all that you endeavor. When nothing else revives your soul, your baptism stands and makes you whole and then in death completes you. Your baptism completes you in death." Have you ever thought about death actually completing you? I mean, we tend to be afraid of death. We tend to think of death as something foreign, as something we don't want to face. But here we know that because Christ died and rose from the dead and because we have been baptized into his death, death now completes us.

His death completes us because it gives us the forgiveness of sins. Our baptism completes us because we are buried. Our old Adam, our sinful nature is buried and drowned in the waters of baptism connected to the cross of Christ. And then finally, think about this. When you die, what happens? You close your eyes and you wake up and you are with God. You are with God. Your sins are washed away completely, no longer affecting you and deceiving you anymore. Your aches and pains and trials and tribulations and struggles of life are gone. You are with God. You are praising him with all of his glory. All of our loved ones who have died before us are with God praising him at peace.

They are complete and God is promising to take them and us from our deaths to life again in the new heavens and the new earth where we will live for all eternity, body and soul, at peace with God. Our death completes us because we have been already buried with Christ and are made alive with him. So our physical death holds no fear because we know that is when it really gets good. That is when life really begins with God. What a joyous day that's going to be. We celebrate our baptism because we are told we are dead in our sins and trespasses and made alive in Christ. We are alive because of the words and the water that we were baptized into. Now you might wonder, how can such water do such great things? Hopefully you've heard that before. If you studied your catechism, when we talked about baptism, how can mere water do such great things?

It's not just water alone, but the word connected to the water that does these great things. It is the word of God that is connected with the water that actually really marks you as a child of God, adopts you into the family. You all in your baptisms were marked with a permanent mark that you cannot erase. We talk about this in Revelation chapter 6 and 7, that we've been studying for a bit, okay, two years. The book of Revelation in chapter, sorry, I got too excited and swallowed my cough drop. In Revelation, it talks about a mark that was given to the people. Now, we're not talking about the mark of the beast or anything like that that comes much later, but the mark that we're talking about in Revelation first is the mark that was given to us, to all of us who have been washed in the blood of Christ.

In our baptisms, we receive a mark of God, a spiritual mark that claims us as his children. If you remember in our baptismal rite last week, we actually had a baptism and I was able to on this six month old young boy, to mark him on the forehead and upon the heart to mark him as one redeemed by Christ. Now, I didn't have a marker that actually put the cross on him, but with the waters of baptism, he was marked and so were we. We were marked by God's word and we were claimed as his children and therefore the devil, the world, the cosmos, our own sinful nature, everything out there knows that we are children of God because we have been baptized. And I think that's why we have this revelation passage as our Old Testament, or I'm sorry, Genesis passage as our Old Testament reading. The very beginning of the Bible.

We already have the Trinity right here. We've got the beginning, God created and then the Spirit was hovering over the water. See, when we get the words of God, the Spirit always goes with the word and hovers and sanctifies those waters and brings us to completion, brings our faith to completion. So the Spirit is hovering not just over the waters of the first day of creation, but hovering over all waters of baptism so that when we are baptized with God's word, we receive the power of the Holy Spirit. We receive the blessings of sanctification and life everlasting in him. And then God speaks and he says, "Let there be light." And there was light. And how does God speak? What does he use? He uses his word. The word of God is the thing that the Father uses to create everything, and that word does what he says it's going to do.

When the word spoke, when the Word of God said, "Let there be light," there was light and every other day of creation when he said, "Let there be fish," there were fish. "Let there be birds," there were birds. God's word does what he says it's going to do. So we know with absolute certainty that when God says through Peter, "This baptism now saves you." That is true because God's word has said it. And what God's word says is real. It was real when he created the universe created heavens and earth and it is just as real for us when we are baptized, when I as God's spokesman speak over the child or anybody receiving baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, those words do what God says they will do. They create life, your life in Christ, eternal life for all believers. And we can hold fast to that because he has promised it to be true.

He has also promised that we are no longer slaves to sin. We do not need to be weighed down by the corruption of the sin in our world. We can give that to God and when we give it to God, we can be free to serve him with joy and thanksgiving. We can be free to set aside our sin and to live for Christ. Sin is not something that is attractive, although we tend to think it is oftentimes, oh, I can't do this or that or the other thing. When we think about sin, it is evil. It is corrupt, it is something that goes against the will of God and it is bad for us. And so when we remember our baptisms, we remember that the sin has been washed away. And if it has been washed away, we don't want to jump back into the muck again. But we want to stay clean. We want to serve God. We want to rejoice in his presence and in his word. So this is an encouragement for all of us to remember our baptisms.

Remember in our baptisms, the old Adam was killed and drowned. Remember, in our baptisms, we were connected with the life and death and resurrection of Christ. Remember, in our baptisms, we have been freed from the fear of death. In our baptisms, we have already died and been brought to life again in faith that we will see fully and completely when we take our last breath, when death completes us and we were with God and we can celebrate for all eternity, the joy of our salvation and the praise of his glorious creator who has given us all things and promised us in his word, "I will be with you always to the very end of the age." Those words are just as true as let there be light. They do what he says they will do. He is with you.

You can trust him, you can put your faith in him, and you can be at peace. My peace I give to you, those are also true words that are real today, regardless of all the chaos that is going on around us. And there's a lot of it. We have peace and we are not afraid because we are marked in baptism as God's children and he loves us and cares for us. And as his good children, let us seek to serve him, to thank and praise and serve and obey him in all that we say and do out of the joy of our salvation. May his grace, his mercy, and his peace be and abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.