

LifeWay Family Bible Series for June 6: Baptism proclaims an encounter with Christ_53104

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Baptism proclaims an encounter with Christ

Acts 2:36-41; Romans 6:1-10

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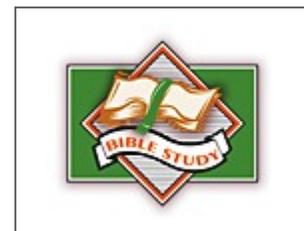
First Baptist Church, College Station

I entered Southwestern Seminary only having preached three sermons. Three years later, I was responsible for three a week. Multiply that times 50 weeks a year, and you get 150 annual sermons. It would be more, but even preachers get a few weeks off each year for good behavior or vacation, whichever comes first!

I now am in my 26th year of full-time pastoring. (Spell Checker just changed the last word to “pestering.” It is bad enough to have a computer that checks my grammar and spelling; I will not tolerate it evaluating my ministry!) That is 3,900 sermons. I am the “Sermonator.” (You should see what Spell Checker did with that one!)

I remember the first sermon I ever preached. I was in the second grade at

the time. Every believer has preached at least one sermon. Do you remember yours? You did not use words. It was a sermon in symbols or signs. It was your baptism. I want to help you remember the sermon you preached in your baptism.



“Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 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” (Romans 6:3-6).

There are two points to the sermon you preached in baptism. The first point was about Jesus. The second point was about you and your decision to follow Jesus.

Baptism is a picture of the gospel story. It symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It tells all who are watching how Jesus became the Savior of the world. Jesus did many things. He preached, taught and healed. These things alone were not the means by which our salvation was achieved. Paul said, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless, and so is your faith” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Your baptism symbolized his death and burial through your immersion under the water. On the third day, Jesus was raised. Rising from the water symbolized the resurrection of Jesus. Fortunately, you did not need to stay

under water for three days to symbolize the three days in the tomb.

When you were baptized, it was as if you said to the church: "Gather around, friends. I want to tell you the story of Jesus. I want you to know how he became my Savior. He died on the cross. He was buried. He was raised." That is the preaching of the church from Pentecost to the present. You preached it through your baptism.

The second point of your sermon was about your decision to follow Jesus. Paul said, "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."

You told the church something about your desire to be a new person, to turn from sin and to be free of its power over you. Again, it was as if you said to the church: "I have decided to follow Jesus. I want to obey him and live for him. I have a new life in him."

Baptism in the early days of the church was done in public. It was an act of proclamation done in the presence of the unbelieving world. Today, we baptize most often in a church, viewed almost exclusively by believers.

Perhaps we should have portable baptisteries on wheels. We could take it to the work place, the neighborhood or school. We could pass out flyers that would say: "I have decided to follow Jesus. Come see my baptism at noon today on the parking lot." I think this kind of public proclamation of faith would be a powerful witness to our world. It certainly was in the first century.

We are Baptists. We did not get this name because of our emphasis on potluck dinners. It has to do with our insistence on believer's baptism by immersion. It is more than an act of initiation into a local Baptist church. It is an act of gospel proclamation. It is a sermon without words. It is the gospel in symbols.

Your baptism was not something some preacher did to you. It was something you said through symbols to God, the church and the world. It was your sermon. It was your story about your life-changing encounter with Jesus. It was the best sermon ever preached in any church. On that day, you were more eloquent than Billy Graham.

Questions for discussion

- ◆ What sermon did your baptism preach?
- ◆ What are other actions that speak volumes-whether we want them to or not?

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