**THE FOUNDATION: MIDWEEK LENTEN SERIES**

# **Baptized into His Death**

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Description automatically generated**Rethinking Midweek Lenten Services**

Midweek Lenten services are a cherished tradition in most of our WELS churches. That time of quiet contemplation helps us prepare our hearts for both the rigors and ultimate jubilance of Holy Week. Typically, those midweek services are used to meditate on the passion of Christ. What else would we talk about in those services? Well, midweek Lent might offer more flexibility than we think, flexibility that is entirely Lutheran not just in theory, but in practice.

One possible midweek Lenten series is a review of the parts of the Catechism. This is actually a time-honored Lutheran tradition. In Martin Luther’s day, a number of times during the year, congregations would have special services in the late afternoon or early evening to teach the catechism. Lent was one of those times. For example, in 1529 Martin Luther did a series on the Lord’s Supper and confession of sin. Thus, by teaching the catechism during Lent, we are continuing a tradition that stretches back over 450 years. (You can find some of these Lenten catechetical sermons in Luther’s Works.)

There are a number of reasons to consider this.

**The first is that this allows you to preach about extremely important theological issues that do not come up often in the lectionary.**

Think about it. A Lutheran preacher references Baptism frequently in his sermons. But how many pericopic texts are about Baptism? You will frequently tell your people how blessed one is who comes to the Lord’s table with a believing heart. But other than Holy Thursday, how often do you get to explain: the difference between the vertical and horizontal relationships in the Lord’s Supper, what it really means to be “worthy,” what it means to examine yourself, etc. Unless an individual is very active in group Bible study and at-home Bible study, the reality is that there are many catechetical teachings one has not heard since 8th grade.

This is not to say that we would not talk about the passion of Christ during midweek Lent. His death and resurrection are at the center of our faith and every other doctrine comes back to them. So draw the connection! For example, this midweek series utilized the theme *Baptized into His Death*. St. Paul writes, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3). Baptism connects us to the passion. It places us with Christ’s wounds. It buries our sin with his lifeless body. So draw that connection. Include the passion readings in your midweek services. It is Lent, after all. But then preach about the miraculous washing that is only miraculous because of the promise of the passion.

**Another reason is that it allows broader exposure to the story of Christ’s passion if a church utilizes Passion Sunday.**

*Christian Worship 21* re-introduced the custom of the Sunday before Easter being Passion Sunday, a custom common in the broader Christian church. The reading of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem is read on the first Sunday in Advent, because it is a microcosm of Jesus’ saving work—the Son of God humbling himself as he progresses toward his death on our behalf. That reading can be repeated on Passion Sunday as the first reading in a series that recounts all of Christ’s passion.

What is the reason for this pivot? It acknowledges the reality that many of our people do not attend midweek services. Therefore, if the passion account is read *only* during midweek Lent, Sunday-only worshipers hear only the account of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey… and then that Christ has risen. Moving the passion account—from the moment Christ rides into Jerusalem to the moment he is placed in the tomb—to the Sunday prior to Easter allows more people to hear the full story of Christ’s death and resurrection. (Passion Sunday can be observed as a series of lessons followed by Lenten hymns, concluding with a shorter sermonette.)

In the *Baptized into His Death* series, people will hear the story of Christ’s passion unfold over five Wednesdays. (Ash Wednesday retains its own special focus.) However, the sermon will focus mostly on Baptism. A message about Christ’s death comes on Passion/Palm Sunday and Good Friday.

**A summary of this series**

*Baptized into His Death* is an updated version of a series WELS Congregational Services modeled a decade ago, illustrating how to use midweek Lent as a catechetical review. The series attempts to retain the feel of midweek Lent—solemn awe and wonder at this time of repentance and renewal. Yet, it allows the preacher to review the important doctrines related to Holy Baptism.

Some might balk, *“Five weeks on Baptism! Won’t that get boring?”* Yes. If you say the same thing week after week. However, that is no different than your regular Sunday preaching. If we have a cookie-cutter approach to sermons, it gets boring. Thus, to preach the catechism, you need to commit yourself to the same struggle you commit yourself to as a faithful preacher each week. That struggle is to avoid saying too much! Say only what you need to say on that day. You have four other days to say everything else.

We are not providing text studies for these sermons. We are providing a suggested sermon text and talking points that revolve around the theme for that week. (These are not shared in any particular order and are not a recommended outline. They are simply points referenced in the sermon text.) It is important, therefore, to familiarize yourself with the arc of the five weeks. This is doubly true if you have multiple people preaching during those five weeks.

The first part of this document contains sermon ideas. The second part contains a sample order of service that can be modified as desired.

The series covers these themes:

Week 1: A Sacrament, not a Sign

Week 2: A Great Power and a Greater Gift

Week 3: Baptism Is Needed by All

Week 4: The Right Tool for This Job

Week 5: Reliving Your Baptism Every Day

A place for receiving an offering is indicated. This should be deleted if the offering is not received by passing the plates.

Hymn substitutions: The new WELS hymnal includes a section not found in CW93 (though some of the hymns were found in other sections of CW93): Baptismal Life, 678–693. If it is desired to substitute a hymn for one in the services of this series, that section is a good place to consider.

May the Lord richly bless your preparation. And may he give you a double portion of his Spirit as you stand before his people as his herald!

A word about capitalization. This document follows the NPH style guide which states in part: “Capitalize all names for the sacraments (Baptism and Holy Communion).” But when referring to an event of baptism, lowercase. “Capitalize when referring to the sacrament. Lowercase in general: daily baptism, Jesus’ baptism, your child’s baptism.”

Format of this file. To facilitate usage, this document is formatted for legal (11x14) landscape, book fold, the most common layout for worship folders. It uses MS Word “styles” adapted from *Christian Worship: Service Builder*. The fastest and best way to modify fonts and layout details is by modifying “styles”—not manually tweaking the layout. Providing the series in this format allows anyone to use it, those with and without the new hymnal (with some hymn substitutions) and those without *Service Builder* software. Those with *Service Builder* may import the services into My Worship Resources, especially if they anticipate using the series again sometime in the future.

Pagination is not optimized, since local customs and additions will modify the layout. For example, the Amen following the prayer on page 20 occurs on page 21—something to be avoided!

Week 1: BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

# A Sacrament, not a Sign

**SERMON TEXT: 1 Peter 3:18-22**

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. 19 After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— 20 to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes Baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

**POSSIBLE TALKING POINTS**

* Many people view Baptism as symbolic and something man does to show devotion to God. However, this passage makes it clear that Baptism is *not* a symbol. Peter states clearly, “Baptism… saves you.” It is a sacrament. Look carefully at what Peter says. He *doesn’t* say, “Baptism symbolizes something.” He says water (including the water of the Flood) is a sign (i.e., symbolizes) of what Baptism does—save us from sin. That is what God does in a Sacrament. He connects his Gospel with things we will see constantly—water, wine, bread—so that earthly blessings might remind us of eternal ones. Hence, the theme of the day.
* The Flood connection—The waters of the flood killed God’s enemies, but it saved God’s people from the decay and destruction of sin. Thus, the flood foreshadows the way God would use the water of Baptism to save us from our sin and eternal death.
* We are baptized, “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” However, one’s “name” is not just a word by which one is identified, e.g., Matthew, Jennifer, etc. “Name” can refer to one’s reputation. E.g., *“Don’t tell those lies and sully their good name!”* So being baptized into Christ’s name ultimately means being connected to everything Christ did on our behalf, which Peter recounts here. Note the abundant references to the passion. “Christ also suffered once for sins… He was put to death…” Peter also mentions his triumphal resurrection and even his proclamation of victory to the evil spirits.
* Thus, Baptism doesn’t represent forgiveness. It gives it. How? Peter mentions the passion of the Christ. He talks about being saved “…by the resurrection of Christ Jesus.” Through the Word combined with the water, the Spirit creates (or strengthens) the faith in all that Christ did for us. Through that faith, created in our Baptism, we receive the merits of Christ’s work.
* Baptism is what God does for us, not what we do for him. This is true when an adult chooses to be baptized. He wants what God does for him in Baptism. This is true when parents bring a child to be baptized. They are doing so because they know there are things they cannot do for their child… cannot give their child.
* To think of Baptism as a sign changes it into an act of work righteousness. If “Baptism saves you” as Scripture says and Baptism is something you do, then salvation is dependent upon you.
* There is a sign in Baptism—water. God uses water in Baptism so that we have a constant sign of his love. Every time we wash our hands, we can remember that our very soul has been cleansed by God. Every time we see the ocean, we know our sins are buried at the bottom of something much deeper. Every time we stand in the shower, warm water sluicing over our back… when we feel the grime wash away… when we feel the warm water relax us… we remember water is indeed a sign, a constant reminder of God’s love. But Baptism—water and the Word—that is much more than a sign, more than a reminder. It is a Sacrament. It is “touchable” Gospel. What a God—that he would connect our salvation to the most abundant element on the planet, that we would daily remember the love God has for us, evidenced by our Baptism!
* Cross-references:

Romans 6:3 - Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Galatians 3:26,27 - So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Week 2: BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

# A Great Power and a Greater Gift

**SERMON TEXT: Titus 3:4-7**

4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

**POSSIBLE TALKING POINTS**

* St. Paul stresses that salvation is indeed a gift, and “not because of righteous things we had done.” It also makes it clear that the power of Baptism is not water, but the Holy Spirit’s power unleashed in the Word. Hence, the theme of the day.
* The power of Baptism lies not in the water. It is not holy water… not magic or mystical. It’s tap water. However, this ordinary water is combined with the Word, the means through which the Spirit does his good work. Thus, the Word of God is capable of doing anything that God wills. Is that not what we see throughout Scripture? “Let there be light,” and there is. “Lazarus, come out,” and he does. In Baptism, God unleashes his power to give the gift of faith.
* Some people struggle to understand how infants can have faith. Since they don’t understand that, they do not see any reason why infants should be baptized. However, by his great power, the Spirit can give the gift of faith to anyone. Dead is dead. Thus, it is just as “difficult” to create faith in the heart of a child as it is to create faith in the heart of an adult. If anything, the adult may be the bigger challenge! The adult’s more mature intellect and reason will want to understand that which is beyond comprehension—how water and word can do such great things.
* Faith affects the intellect, but it is not entirely intellectual. When God speaks through his Word in Baptism to the child, we do not worry about whether or not it creates a comprehensive intellectual grasping of the message. We simply take God’s Word as true when it says that Baptism creates faith.
* St. Paul uses both rebirth and renewal in describing Baptism. (Look at the chiasm there.) There are multiple points that could be made here.
* What role did we play in our physical birth? None. We were born physically entirely by the will and actions of others. It is no different with our spiritual birth.
* Rebirth could describe what Baptism does for one who currently has no faith, like a child being brought to the font by his parent. Just as the child was born once (physically), he is now reborn spiritually. Renewal could describe what Baptism does for one who God has brought to faith already, i.e., an older child or adult. We perhaps think of the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip shares the good news of the Savior that was proclaimed in the scroll of Isaiah. The Spirit grants the gift of faith. This leads to the eunuch eventually stating, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” (Acts 8:36).
* Cross-references:

John 3:5 - Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

Acts 2:38 - Peter replied, “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. (The Holy Spirit gives many gifts. We talk about “spiritual gifts” all the time. But *the* gift of the Spirit, i.e., the best thing he can give you, is faith—faith that grasps the merits of Christ.)

Ephesians 5:25,26—… Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

Mark 16:16—Jesus said, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Week 3: BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

# Baptism Is Needed by All

**SERMON TEXT: John 3:1-8**

1Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

**POSSIBLE TALKING POINTS**

* Set the context. Tell the story of Nicodemus, which is dramatic.
* Jesus teaches Nicodemus that the imperfect cannot create the perfect, nor the unholy create the holy. Sarx only can produce sarx. But the Spirit can give spiritual life. And he gives it in ways we really can’t see.
* The doctrine of original sin is vital to a correct understanding of the world. We can easily witness it. What parent teaches a child to lie or fight or disobey? Parents needn’t teach their child such things. Children just know because they are born of sinful flesh.
* “Born again”—Man is born the first time physically, i.e., he has physical life. He is born a second time spiritually, i.e., he has spiritual life… faith. This parallels the two deaths we read about in Scripture. The first death is physical. The second death is spiritual/eternal. If we’ve experienced the second birth, the first death is entirely transformed from curse to blessing and the second death is now non-existent.
* Children not only are capable of sin, but they are also capable of faith, as Jesus himself testifies.
* A simple ministerial use of reason: All commit sin. Baptism washes sin away. There is no command that limits Baptism. Thus, Baptism is needed and intended for all.
* Any explanation of why not to baptize infants has no scriptural basis. This is true of the age of accountability as well.
* Scripture refers to Baptism as a superior replacement for circumcision—a cutting of the sinful nature, not just some flesh (see Romans 2). While we are cautious not to extend this metaphor too far, this would seem to speak to the use of Baptism for the young.
* Why no examples of children being baptized in Scripture? There probably are. “He had his whole household.” We find phrases like that in Acts. It is logical that there would not be stories surrounding infant Baptism. Baptism is newly instituted. When we engage in evangelism, we typically reach the parents first, do we not? We don’t militantly baptize infants. We reach the parents and then, when the Holy Spirit brings the parents to faith, the entire family might be baptized together. This is the pattern of the early New Testament church. So we hear the story of an adult, the jailer of Philippi, being brought to faith. He then has his whole household baptized.
* Cross-references:

Psalm 51:5 - Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Matthew 18:6—Jesus said, “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

Acts 2:38,39 - Peter replied, “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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Acts 16:33 - …Then immediately he and all his household were baptized.

Week 4: BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

# The Right Tool for This Job

**SERMON TEXT: Matthew 28:18-20**

18Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

**POSSIBLE TALKING POINTS**

* The Great Commission sets before Christians our *raison d’etre*, the reason for us to exist as the Church Militant. We are to disciple the world. We do not have the ability to do that. It would be like giving a piece of granite to a sculpture and saying, “Sculpt!” With what? His fingers? He needs tools! Likewise, to connect people close to Christ takes tools. And God has given us the most powerful of them all—the Gospel. The Great Commission tells us to unleash the Gospel through Baptism and ongoing teaching.
* Baptism is not magic. The faith created in Baptism requires ongoing instruction in the word, or that faith will be lost. Not “might be lost.” Not “could be lost.” It will be lost if teaching does not follow Baptism. Thus, anyone who accuses Lutherans of viewing Baptism as superstitious, a “good luck” ritual that puts one into heaven no matter what, does not understand Scripture or Lutheranism.
* Thus, while Baptism is “the right tool for the job” of the Church, it isn’t the only tool. This shapes the way we look at ministry. When we offer Lutheran elementary education and Sunday school… when we hold Bible studies… when we have small groups gather to discuss God’s Word… it is simply a continuation of work that was begun in our Baptism. These are all parts of “teaching them to obey everything I’ve commanded you.” To think of Baptism as the *only* tool for building God’s Church would be like thinking you can build a skyscraper with just a backhoe. You *need* a backhoe; you also need more.
* Jesus gave us our target when he said “all nations.” This builds upon last week when we saw that children are to be baptized. It also is an encouragement to look beyond ourselves: ethnographically, socioeconomically, and culturally. Baptism tears down every possible wall man builds between himself and others. It is equally needed by all.
* Who can baptize and who should baptize? The Great Commission makes it clear that anyone can baptize. We typically have the pastor do it as a matter of order. But in emergency, this is a power that any Christian may wield.
* Even if the pastor is generally the one who performs the rite of Baptism, that doesn’t mean he is the only one involved in an individual’s baptism. Consider the role of sponsors/godparents. People often think this is just meant to honor those asked to be godparents. No! Nor is it simply that the godparent is a witness. “I can testify that you were baptized. I saw it happen.” The godparent is to help the parent in “teaching [the child] to obey everything.” The same is true for the role of the church (as seen in the baptismal rite in *Christian Worship*.) Members pledge to do all they can to help this young brother or sister remain in the true faith. The application of the water and speaking of God’s name is only one way to be involved in the blessing of Baptism. Gospel ministry is *not* something that pastors and teachers do, and members support with their offerings, but beyond that are only spectators. Gospel ministry is something God gives us all the privilege of doing. We just do it in different ways.
* Jesus’ promise is to be with us in our ministerial efforts. For we are only acting on his authority.
* Our mission and the means are both given to us here. And it is not given as command… as burden. It’s given as privilege! Any earthly accomplishment will ultimately be forgotten. A surgeon can save ten-thousand people and that is wonderful. All ten thousand will die eventually. An architect can build the world’s tallest building, and that is an accomplishment. One day that building will be rubble. But the work we do as Church will echo into eternity.
* Possible cross-references.

In the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, we see Baptism and teaching combined.

Ephesians 6:4—Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Sometimes, it happens that parents think that they can delegate the spiritual instruction of their children to “spiritual professionals.” *“The pastor baptized my child. The pastor will teach my child everything God’s Word says.”* Yet, in the discipling of children, the primary responsibility falls upon the parent. The parent continues the work that was begun in Baptism.

Week 5: BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

# Reliving Your Baptism Every Day

**SERMON TEXT: Romans 6:1-14**

1What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into 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.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

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.

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. 14 For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

**POSSIBLE TALKING POINTS**

* The preacher may want to limit the text. Verses 2 through 4 and 11 through 13 are what drive home the theme of this day.
* The old quip, “The Old Adam is a good swimmer.” Repentance (a big concept in Lent) is simply the drowning of the Old Adam all over again.
* Baptism did not just impart forgiveness. It is when the Holy Spirit began to dwell in you, turning your body into his temple. The power of the Spirit resides in you.
* “…just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”—There is an argument from the greater to the lesser in Scripture. If God can reanimate a corpse, which Easter proves he can do, why would we think he couldn’t help us to change our lives? Why would we ever think a temptation was too great to resist? On our own, yes. But what is more difficult, to make the dead rise, or to help someone to control their tongue… or to avoid the abuse of alcohol… or to be responsible on the Internet? If Jesus was raised through the glory of the Father, then clearly, we too may live a new life by the power God unleashed within us in our baptism.
* Baptism is a pledge of a clean conscience before God, but that assumes that a conscience that is active and alive and well. A conscience that would turn baptism into a license to sin is a conscience that is dead. Nothing that is dead can be clean! The person who says, “My baptism gives me a license to commit whatever sins I want,” has killed off the faith that was first created in baptism.
* We were not just saved *from* things: sin, death, Satan, hell. We were saved *for* things. Baptism not only saves us from that which is bad, it enables us to do the things for which we were created. It enables us to live the “new life.”
* Possible cross-references:

Psalm 38:18 - I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.

Ephesians 4:22-24 - You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Colossians 2:6,7 - So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

# **BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH**

# ORDERS OF SERVICE

*On the first page of the worship folder, list the promotional text, series theme, and the theme of the day. Example:*

# BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

# A Sacrament, not a Sign

**Lent: A Time of Catechetical Review**

Already at the time of the Reformation, Lutheran churches would hold special services several times each year that to review the catechism, a summary of key biblical teachings. Lent was almost always used as a time of catechetical review. We follow this Lutheran tradition this Lent by gathering for special midweek services under the following theme.

**Baptized into His Death**

St. Paul writes, “Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death” (Romans 6:3). There is a connection between our baptism and Christ’s passion. This makes Lent the perfect season to learn anew all that which God’s Word tells us about Baptism. We will see how we were powerfully connected in our baptism to all Christ’s saving work. We will study again what our baptism means for our daily lives. And we will rededicate ourselves to the struggle of living the new life Baptism gives.

**Today—Baptism: A Sacrament, not a Sign**

*Daily text here*

**Announcements**

*Local text here*

Week 1: BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

# A Sacrament, not a Sign

Signs and symbols. These are artifacts that represent something larger. Take thirteen red and white stripes with fifty-stars on a field of blue. That flag is more than just colored cloth sewn together. It represents something—the history, values, and ideals of the United States of America. That shiny piece of metal on the man-in-blue’s chest is more than decoration. It is a sign, marking that police officer as one who has authority, as well as the duty to protect and serve. Signs and symbols are important because they represent something larger.

There are those who view Baptism as an important sign, a symbolic representation of the way God washes away our sin. They could not be more wrong. Baptism doesn’t represent something. Baptism *is* something. St. Peter says plainly, “Baptism… saves you” (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism isn’t a sign. Baptism is a sacrament. God has connected his saving work and Word with a common earthly element—water. As we begin our Lenten look at Baptism, let us remember what we are looking at when we see someone come to the font. That is not a sign. It is not symbolic. It is a miracle… a Holy Sacrament.

# ORDER OF SERVICE

HYMN Sweet the Moments, Rich in Blessing (400)

Stand

In the name of the Father, and of the T Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

In Christ, God gives us water welling up for eternal life. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Lord, give us this water and we shall thirst no more.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

PRAYER

Blessed are you, sovereign God of all. To you be glory and praise forever. You are our light and our salvation. From the deep waters of death you have raised your Son to life in triumph. Grant that all who have been born anew by water and the Spirit may daily be renewed in your image, walk by the light of faith, and serve you in newness of life; through your anointed Son, Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit we lift our voices of praise. Blessed be you, God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Blessed be God forever. Amen.**

THE NEW LIFE OF BAPTISM

Those who are baptized are called to worship and serve God. Therefore I ask you:

Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your neighbor as yourself?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you acknowledge Christ’s authority over human society, by prayer for the world and its leaders, by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice?

With the help of God, I will.

Then let us pray.

PRAYER

Eternal God, our beginning and our end, preserve in your people the new life of baptism; as Christ receives us on earth, so may he guide us through the trials of this world and enfold us in the joy of heaven, where you live and reign, one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

Be seated

RESPONSE God’s Own Child, I Glady Say It (679:1)

READING 1 Peter 3:18-22

RESPONSE God’s Own Child, I Glady Say It (679:2)

PASSION READING Mark 14:1-26—*Perfume, Plot, & Passover*

After the reading

All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus

were baptized into his death.

HYMN Come to Calvary’s Holy Mountain (394)

SERMON

HYMN Word and Water, Filled with Promise (647: 1,2,4)

OFFERING

Stand

EVENING PRAYERS

O God our Father, by your mercy and might the world turns safely into darkness and returns again to light. We place into your hands our unfinished tasks, our unsolved problems, and our unfulfilled hopes, knowing that only what you bless will prosper. To your great love and protection we commit each other and all those we love, knowing that you alone are our great defender.

Amen.

Special prayers and petitions may follow.

LORD’S PRAYER

Hear us as we pray as Jesus taught.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

May God lead you in truth and steady your spirit.

May Christ renew your joy and strengthen your will.

May the Spirit teach you God’s hidden wisdom and fill you with songs of rejoicing.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,

in the name of Christ. Amen.

Be seated

HYMN God, Who Made the Earth and Heaven (787:1,2)

Week 2: BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

# A Great Power and a Greater Gift

There is no such thing as holy water. The water used in Baptism did not come from a magic fountain or mystical lake. It came out of the tap. Yet, Baptism consists of more than just water. It is water combined with God’s Word. And God’s Word is powerful! God’s Word is the tool the Holy Spirit uses to create and strengthen faith—faith that connects us to Christ’s death and resurrection. Thus, when you witness a baptism, you are witnessing more power being unleashed than you see in a flash of lighting. You are witnessing a power that can take that which is dead and make it alive.

God uses this savior power on us, but not because we deserve it. Because of our sins, we deserve nothing from God but punishment and pain. But our God is merciful. He spares us from the pain we deserve. And our God is gracious. He gives us countless blessings we do not deserve. Today, we marvel at the blessing of Baptism—a great power and greater gift.

# ORDER OF SERVICE

HYMN Not All the Blood of Beasts (398)

Stand

In the name of the Father, and of the T Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

There is one body and one spirit.

There is one hope to which we were called;

one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

one God and Father of all.

Peace be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

PRAYER

Almighty God, in our baptism you have consecrated us to be temples of your Holy Spirit. May we, whom you have counted worthy, nurture this gift of your indwelling Spirit with a lively faith and worship you with upright lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

THE NEW LIFE OF BAPTISM

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvelous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask: Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?

I renounce them.

Do you reject the powers of this world that rebel against God?

I reject them.

Do you repent of the sins that separate you from God and neighbor?

I repent of them.

Do you turn to Christ as Savior and Lord?

I turn to Christ.

Christ claims you for his own. Receive the sign of his T cross. Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ cruciﬁed.

Fight valiantly as a disciple of Christ against sin, the world and the devil, and remain faithful to Christ to the end of your life.

PRAYER

Almighty God, deliver those you have claimed from the powers of darkness. Restore in us the image of your glory and lead us in the light and obedience of Christ.

Amen.

Be seated

RESPONSE God’s Own Child, I Glady Say It (679:1)

READING Titus 3:4-7

RESPONSE God’s Own Child, I Glady Say It (679:3)

PASSION READING Mark 14:27-42—*Gethsemane*

After the reading

All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus

were baptized into his death.

HYMN Go to Dark Gethsemane (425)

SERMON

HYMN Baptized into Your Name Most Holy (680)

Stand

EVENING PRAYERS

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day. Forgive me all my sins, and graciously keep me this night. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me.

Amen.

Special prayers and petitions may follow

LORD’S PRAYER

Hear us as we pray as Jesus taught.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

BLESSING

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Be seated

HYMN All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night (789:1,2)

Week 3: BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

# Baptism Is Needed by All

Jesus was speaking about Baptism when he said, “No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.” Consider the weight of that phrase, “no one.” It is all encompassing. The murder, the abuser, the terrorist—if they hope to enter the kingdom of God, they need the cleansing washing that comes in Baptism. But so does the gossip, the envious, the worrier. That’s what “no one” means. Clearly, the man who has lived a long life, who has 80-plus years of sin on his record, needs the saving power of Baptism. But so does the newborn infant who is not yet capable of speaking a sinful word. That’s what “no one” means.

This is a hard teaching for people to accept. Many cannot understand how a violent criminal can be in the same moral category as the young “innocent” baby. Yet, in God’s eyes, they are, for they both were born of sinful flesh. Therefore, they both need the salvation God provides through Baptism. Today, we see that Baptism is indeed needed by all.

# ORDER OF SERVICE

HYMN Were You There (426)

Stand

In the name of the Father, and of the T Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Praise God who made heaven and earth,

who keeps his promise forever.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give thanks and praise.**

PRAYER

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ was baptized in the river Jordan: we thank you for the gift of water to cleanse us and revive us. We thank you that through the waters of the Red Sea you led your people out of slavery to freedom in the Promised Land. We thank you that through the deep waters of death you brought your Son and raised him to life in triumph. We thank you that in the water of our baptism you made us one with Christ in his death and in his resurrection, to be cleansed and delivered from all sin. Send your Holy Spirit upon us and raise us with Christ to full and eternal life; for all might, majesty, authority and power are yours, now and forever.

Amen.

THE NEW LIFE OF BAPTISM

I ask you, with the whole Christian Church, to confess your baptismal faith.

Do you believe in God the Father?

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Let us pray.

PRAYER

Almighty God, we thank you for our fellowship in the household of faith with all who have been baptized into your name. Keep us faithful to our baptism, and so make us ready for that day when the whole creation shall be made perfect in your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Be seated

RESPONSE God’s Own Child, I Glady Say It (679:1)

READING John 3:1-8

RESPONSE God’s Own Child, I Glady Say It (679:4)

PASSION READING Mark 14:43-65—*Trial Before the High Priest*

After the reading

All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus

were baptized into his death.

HYMN He Stood Before the Court (408)

SERMON

HYMN Dearest Jesus, We Are Here (648)

Stand

EVENING PRAYERS

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who watch or work or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, pity the afflicted, sooth the suffering, bless the dying—and all for your love’s sake.

Amen.

Special prayers and petitions may follow.

LORD’S PRAYER

Hear us as we pray as Jesus taught.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Amen.

Be seated

HYMN The Day You Gave Us, Lord, Is Ended (795:1,2)

Week 4: BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

# The Right Tool for This Job

Set a beautiful piece of marble before the world’s best sculptor. Nothing comes of it unless he has the right tools. If he tries to fashion something from that rock with bare hands, he is doomed to nothing but frustration, split nails, and bloody fingertips. He needs a hammer and set of chisels. He needs the right tools. If your car is broken down, you cannot fix it with kitchen utensils. If you need heart surgery, pray the surgeon has more than a jigsaw and lock-wrench. To do a job well, you don’t just need tools. You need the right tools.

Jesus has asked his disciples to make disciples. Think of what that means. He is asking us to call people out of unbelief into the light of Christ. How does one raise the spiritually dead? You need the right tool. And that is what Christ has given us in Baptism. It is the right tool for this job that Christ has given to his Church.

# ORDER OF SERVICE

HYMN Christ, the Life of All the Living (396:1-4)

Stand

In the name of the Father, and of the T Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The LORD says, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name; you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.

When you walk through ﬁre, you shall not be burned.”

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

PRAYER

God, who as at this time taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit: grant us by the same Spirit, given us in our baptism, to have a right judgment in all things and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Savior, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

THE NEW LIFE OF BAPTISM

Fellow redeemed, by your baptism you were not only made sons and daughters of our heavenly Father, but also brothers and sisters to each other. Rejoice in the family of believers.

Brothers and sisters, I rejoice with you in the new life of baptism. Together we will give thanks and praise to God and proclaim the good news to all the world.

As brothers and sisters, you have a solemn responsibility to one another. Therefore, I ask you, in the presence of God and one another, do you intend: to live among God’s faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s Supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Christ, to live according to the will of Christ, walking in all his commands, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth, and especially in our Christian family?

I do, and I ask God to help me.

Do you sincerely intend to love, support and pray for one another in your life in Christ?

I do, and I ask God to guide me.

Then let us pray.

PRAYER

Merciful Father in heaven, we thank you for the blessing of Baptism by which you offer and grant the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Make us willing to carry out our responsibilities to those who have been baptized, so that all of us may finally come to the blessed joys of heaven, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Be seated

RESPONSE God’s Own Child, I Glady Say It (679:1)

READING Matthew 28:18-20

RESPONSE God’s Own Child, I Glady Say It (679:5)

PASSION READING Mark 14:66-15:15—*Trial Before Pilate*

After the reading

All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus

were baptized into his death.

HYMN What Grace Is This (395)

SERMON

HYMN Baptismal Waters Cover Me (657)

Stand

EVENING PRAYERS

Lord Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, fill my mind even as I sleep. Every hurt that has ever been done to me, heal that hurt. Every hurt that I have ever caused another person, heal that hurt. All the relationships that have been damaged in my whole life that I am not aware of, heal those relationships. To that end, if there is anything that I need to do, if I need to go to a person because he or she is still suffering from my hand, bring to my awareness that person. Help me to forgive as you have forgiven me. Remove whatever bitterness may be in my heart, Lord, and fill me wholly with your love.

Amen.

Special prayers and petitions may follow.

LORD’S PRAYER

Hear us as we pray as Jesus taught.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

BLESSING

The blessed and holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love, defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace, now and forevermore.

Amen.

Be seated

HYMN Now Rest Beneath Night’s Shadow (794:3,4)

Week 5: BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

# Reliving Your Baptism Every Day

You can celebrate the day you were born with cake. Perhaps people will sing, “Happy Birthday to you.” Perhaps you will pull out a photo album and stroll down memory lane. You can and should celebrate the day you were born. However, you cannot actually relive the day you were born. (Nor would your mother want you to try!) Yet, we need to relive the day we were reborn in Baptism every day. Not in the sense that we go to church, stand by the font, and have the pastor pour water over our head. That only needed to happen once. But when we repent of our sins, it is like reliving our baptismal day. Our sinful nature, which was buried with Christ in our Baptism, is reburied through repentance.

In the first of his 95 Reformation theses, Dr. Martin Luther wrote, “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.” The entire life! Today we see the joy and the need to relive our baptism every day through repentance.

# ORDER OF SERVICE

HYMN Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed (410)

Stand

In the name of the Father, and of the T Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

We are all one in Christ Jesus. We belong to him through faith, heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

PRAYER

We thank you, almighty God, for the gift of water to sustain, refresh and cleanse all life. Over water the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through water you led the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. In water your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us from the death of sin to newness of life. We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ into his death. By it we share in his resurrection. By your Spirit enable us to relive our Baptism through daily contrition and repentance that we may always walk by the light of faith and continue forever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory, now and forever.

**Amen.**

THE NEW LIFE OF BAPTISM

As baptized children of our loving Father, we confess our sins without fear.

Father eternal, giver of light and grace, we have sinned against you and against our neighbor, in what we have thought, in what we have said, and in what we have done. We are sorry and ashamed, and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past; and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light. Amen.

Silence for personal confession

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, in his great mercy has pardoned and delivered you from all your sins. May he also conﬁrm and strengthen you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us pray.

PRAYER

Almighty and ever-living God, in Baptism by water and the Spirit you have forgiven all our sins. Now let your Holy Spirit rest upon us, we pray: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; the Spirit of counsel and strength; the Spirit of knowledge and true godliness; that our delight may always be in the fear of the Lord.

Amen.

Be seated

RESPONSE God’s Own Child, I Glady Say It (679:1)

READING Romans 6:1-14

RESPONSE God’s Own Child, I Glady Say It (679:5)

PASSION READING Mark 15:16-47—*Death and Burial*

After the reading

All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus

**were baptized into his death.**

HYMN Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted (430)

SERMON

HYMN Renew Me, O Eternal Light (689)

Stand

EVENING PRAYERS

O Lord, support us all the day long, till the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over and our work is done. Then, in your mercy, grant us safe lodging and a holy rest and peace at the last.

Amen.

Special prayers and petitions may follow

LORD’S PRAYER

Hear us as we pray as Jesus taught.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

BLESSING

The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, bless us and preserve us.

Amen.

Be seated

HYMN Abide with Me (783:1,5,6,7)