

Baptism – (Matthew 3:1-17) – (Romans 6:1-4)

- Opening Comments - Opening Prayer
- 2 scriptures today, Matthew 3:1-17, and Romans 6:1-4.

Matthew 3:1-17 - In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” ⁴ John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ “I baptize you with ¹ water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. ¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

- The Church at Rome was listening as well to what was being taught and also understood its importance and the deep meaning of this act..

Romans 6:1-4 - What 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.

- Both scriptures have to do with Baptism... its initiation and its foundation.
- In Hebrews 2, we learned it's time we get a little bolder with our faith.
- First to live it in all its fullness, but also to proclaim it.
- John the Baptist is certainly an outstanding example of that.
- He had a living faith that needed to be proclaimed for the kingdom.
- Before Jesus came upon the earth in the flesh, the bible was alive.
- It had spirit. It was able to talk to people, and the people were able to relate to the word of God.
- And then came John the Baptist, appearing on the scene of history, and he made it clear that the people needed to repent.
- The preaching of repentance wasn't new.
- All through the OT we have seen the Jews repent.
- They understood when they had done wrong, and the need to clean up their act, and to make a payment for their wrongs.
- They already had a clear and good foundation for that.
- The idea of Baptism is a great mystery, and should be to all of us.
- Since the time that this event that happened in the Jordan River,
- There has not been a time or a generation on the earth,
- Where people have heard such a direct method of communication.
- They were told to turn away from the things they were doing wrong, to acknowledge them, confess them, to feel true remorse, and change.
- **That is what repenting means. It is to turn away from our wrongful ways.**
- Every generation since has heard this message, and we are part of it today.
- And if we think about what has transpired since Jesus came, we will realize that the civilized world then was very small in geographical terms.
- They had no concept that the world was round, that it extended so far

- To the East and the West, and North and South to the 2 poles.
- They didn't conceive that there were other continents,
- Land that would one day become so populated.
- Since those early days history has gone through a multitude of changes:
- There have been many plagues, wars and also nuclear destruction.
- There has been space travel, satellites, tremendous technological advances,
- People traveling the world effortlessly,
- With potential leisure space travel to come in our future.
- **And yet Baptism remains unchanged.**
- Its mystery, its relevance, it's as clear as it was since the time Jesus came.
- No one really knows where Baptism came from.
- Some theologians have a theory that it might have come from some ancient Jewish ritual of washing,
- But we do know that God put it into John's ear to institute Baptism,
- As he preached the coming of a new way for people to reconcile with God.
- And the awe of the mystery of Baptism should increase for each one of us.
- Again, there are only 2 things in the Church that Jesus commanded, that He instituted, – Baptism and Holy Communion.
- When we baptize someone, whether in a building or in a river or a lake,
- There is kind of a procedure that we follow.
- We want to make sure that our faith community is gathered, (Wedding)
- And that everyone one has an enhanced understanding of Baptism,
- And to build the meaning of what is to transpire.
- To understand the depth of the mystery of it all. Think about it.
- We have an adult person, of their own free will and conscience, who
- Voluntarily is immersed in water as a symbol of something is a mystery.
- It's one of the 2 things that Jesus procedurally commanded.
- He didn't administratively tell us how to do it,
- But He gave us the meaning behind it.
- We have to remember that the Jewish people loved order, and the rigid following of rules.
- That is what the OT was about.

- They were told when to eat, what to eat, and what not to eat.
- They were told how much the hem of their garments was to be.
- There were over 600 requirements for daily living.
- But John warned them to not make Baptism a ritual.
- They came to John wanting to fulfill this ritual that he introduced,
- And he told them, this is not a ritual. He said, ¹¹ **“I baptize you with¹ water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”**
- His winnowing fork, or in The KJV is called a fan, which was a farm tool.
- Once the harvest was gathered up, they would put it in a room,
- Take a big fan and wave it at their harvest, which was mostly grain.
- And the fan would rid the grain of its impurities.
- He told these people, Look at your whole life,
- And not just go and do the ritual,
- For a ritual accomplishes nothing.
- If you take a dry sinful person, and immerse them in water,
- They will come out of the water as a wet sinful person.
- Nothing has changed, if it is just a ritual.
- John told them that a Savior is coming, who is going to speak to us all,
- And He is going to touch our hearts in a supernatural way,
- A way that John the Baptist was unable to do himself.
- And with the fan in the hand of Jesus, He will blow on the harvest of our lives,
- And the things that are useless, all the chaff will be purged.
- And He will burn it up in an unquenchable fire.
- Jesus will separate what is good and bad from our lives.
- John wanted them to know the meaning of it, so it would not be a ritual,
- But instead a life changing spiritual event.
- There are many denominations that believe that one has to be baptized to join a church, or re-baptized for their own church.

- I've known of people who were baptized numerous times, but this is wrong.
- Baptism is not an initiating rite into an organization.
- Instead, it is an initiating rite into the Church that Christ established.
- A church that consists of all those who have been bonded, united, and baptized into Jesus Christ.
- It's the gathering up of all that is good, and getting rid of the chaff.
- Jesus Christ owns the harvest of our lives. God is the one who owns our hearts,
- And He is greater than the organizations of men.
- Do you have a John the Baptist in your life? Is there someone who
- Reached you and made you understand your need for a Savior?
- And we all like to think that there are many John the Baptists out there
- Who will let people know that there are more important things than the ways of this world, a world where we are just visitors.
- Someone who tells us that we need to repent.... That we need to believe and receive, that we need to be baptized as a believer, as Christ commanded.
- Are you a John the Baptist?
- Are you willing to share the gauntlet so others will repent and come to Christ?
- Or do we come as a generation of vipers, only going through the motions.
- Normally, when we baptize someone, we have a conversation,
- To affirm that the one to be baptized has received Christ as L & S.
- They give their best intentions to do their best to live up to the standards of the Word.
- It's a way to establish an agreement to live by the New Covenant, a covenant that we made with God.
- Jesus came to be baptized, though He had no sin. John recognized that, and hesitated, but ¹⁵ **Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.**
- In other words, see that you do what you need to do.
- If Jesus himself was willing to be baptized, He confirms that we all need to do this in our own lives.
- And what does scripture tell us about continuing to sin? **Romans 6:1-4 - What 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?

³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We 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.

- It's decision time. Do we want to change our lives?
- The first step is to repent, to turn away from our sinful ways.
- The second is to receive Jesus and Lord and Savior, and be baptized as Christ commanded.
- I don't know where everyone is in this process.
- But the good news is that Today is the Day of Salvation, A decision can be made right now.
- And for those of us who are baptized as believers, it's time to reflect.
- Does our life show the fruits of the Holy Spirit?
- So let us all strive to live our lives circumspectly, living obediently to His word.
- Close in prayer.