

Sunday Sermon 021824 Genesis 9:8-17, Mark 1:9-15, 1 Peter 3:21-22

“Dying and Living with Jesus through Baptism”

One day, as the last rain storm was ending, I was driving downhill out of Wrightwood on Angels Crest Hwy. Suddenly, a large rainbow appeared in my field of vision through the black clouds covering the endless Mojavi Desert. For a moment, as I recalled the story of the Bible, I felt like I was seeing evidence that God was working tirelessly even in harsh and changeable weather.

God said in Genesis 9:16, "Every time a rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it, and I will remember the everlasting covenant I have made." That is why there are many of God's works in places where there are many rainbows.

Every time we see a rainbow, God also sees the rainbow. In a rainbow, we come face-to-face with God. It's a wonderful thing! So, then it must be true that there is a lot of God's work in Wrightwood, right?

Through today's scriptures, we discover the beginning of baptism and its resulting history.

In the text of Genesis, we can see that the water of death has become the water of life. The world had been completely filled with water by the flood and was destroyed. But God promised that he would never judge the world by water again, and He created a rainbow as a token of that promise.

How does a rainbow come about? By water and light coming together. The water of death became a token of life in the light of God's promise. The water that saved Noah's family symbolizes baptism.

Do you remember that the flood of Noah's Day served as both killing and saving water at the same time? All those who were not aboard Noah's ark, those who did not believe in God, and those who had not accepted Noah's warning all died because of the flood.

But the people who were in the boat, those who believed in God, and those who accepted Noah's warning all lived because the waters of the flood pushed the ark up safely and it floated atop the water. This picture reminds us of the salvation we receive through the baptism of Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel of Mark, God expresses how much He loves us through the baptism of His son, Jesus. God declared about Jesus, "You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you." The meaning of "son" here is an expression indicating that he is like God Himself.

But right after the baptism, his son fasted for forty days, took on a spiritual battle against Satan, and was victorious. Jesus, who is fully armed spiritually from a human point of view, began His ministry of the gospel. This ministry eventually led to His crucifixion, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension to heaven. He did it for you and for me, the object of His love.

In some ways, baptism can be said to be like having a wedding ceremony between Jesus and me. Baptism is an act that confesses that you have been given life in association with Christ. Through the baptismal ceremony, we swear before God, ourselves, and the congregation that we and Jesus are united. However, baptism alone does not guarantee salvation. Salvation can only be attained by believing in the resurrection of Christ.

Similar to a baptismal covenant, the pastor of the United Methodist Church asks during the marriage ceremony, "I ask you now, in the presence of God and these people, to declare your intention to enter into union with one another through the grace of Jesus Christ, who calls you into union with himself as acknowledged in your baptism."

The officiant may also ask, for example, "Euni, will you have Son to be your husband to live together in holy marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health (and even in a bald head. - joke), and forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?"

Baptism is not a bathing activity that cleanses the dirt off the body. It cleanses the conscience through conscious acts and the sins of the soul. Through the baptism ceremony, we pledge to believe in Jesus as our Savior and to follow His teachings. At that time, we guarantee that the Lord is our eternal Savior before many witnesses.

Baptism is becoming one with Christ – dying with him on the cross and being resurrected with him. How much do we care about the mysterious blessing that God bestows through baptism? The baptism itself is just a one-time event. But the meaning and blessings we experience through it remain in our lives forever.

Types of baptism and union with Christ

There are three types of baptisms. The first and most common is water baptism (Matthew 3:11), which is the sign of being born again. The second is a fire baptism. Thank goodness this isn't the most common form of baptism [joke]. Fire baptism is the sign of holiness and the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). I like to think I was baptized with fire on my head, which explains my lack of hair.

The third is the baptism of suffering (Luke 12:50). It tests our reality. Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, Job's trials, and the sacrifice of Paul for spreading the gospel all belong to this type of baptism.

The process of going through the baptism of suffering is bitter, of course, but the fruit is worthy and glorious. The final goal of the Christian is to experience all three, and receive the Lord's crown.

Each year, every local church in the UMC releases its annual report on the number of people baptized that year. This is because, for now, the number is an objective measure of the expansion of the gospel. Inviting a non-believer to church and making him a resident of heaven is a fundamental way of expanding the kingdom. This is the greatest task Jesus asked us to do.

In addition, we must live steadfast lives of faith, remembering our pledge when we are baptized, which was, "With God's help, we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will pray for people that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life."

I want to show you one thing today. This picture shows my son Philip, 10 months old, playing in the water in the bathtub. He was so cute, right? I often wonder what happened to him. At that time, he could barely sit, so he sat inside a 13 x 11-inch plastic container. Leaving him in the bathtub, he was in danger of life because he couldn't hold himself up. That container, which is more than 40 years old, is still kept in good shape like this.

Philip is now 39 years old, 5'10 tall, and weighs the average of an American adult male. Is that tub suitable for him to play in the water now? Maybe even the Olympic-standard swimming pool isn't wide enough for him because he is free, active, and full of energy. But for how many hours can he stay in the water? He must get out of there soon. Otherwise, the "water of living" will soon become the "water of dying."

God, in Noah's time, opened the springs of heaven and earth for 40 days and judged the world with water. At that time, the water went on rising until it was about 25 feet above the tops of the mountains. At that time, all but the people and animals in Noah's ark were killed. The Creator used so much water to judge the fallen world and to save righteous families.

Now here is the font of our baptism we use. 1 pint of water is sufficient for this. Of course, churches that practice emersion baptism need enough water to fill a large tub. God's covenant through the rainbow made it so that there is no need for a flood that covers the entire earth again. Through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, He paid the penalty for human sin.

In fact, our baptism doesn't need even a pint of water; just a drop of water is enough. Because even one drop of the living water of Jesus is enough to save us from the eternal punishment of our sins. In this way, baptism is provided to us as a spiritual framework for the power of Jesus to come upon us.

Are you experiencing the power, joy, and hope of life associated with Jesus today? The real effect of the living water we need is not its abundance. A drop of water, poured on us through baptism and flowing from the fountain of the power of Jesus' resurrection, will lead us day by day into a new, pure, eternal life of victory.

I bless all of the Lord's children who make their unity with Jesus Christ the driving force of their lives. There will be a victory to achieve the vision of salvation for the whole world, beyond the boundaries of homes, churches, and nations. Amen.

**** Reflections and Applications for Today's Sermon:**

1) When was the last time you saw a rainbow, and what did you feel when you saw it? How does that feeling relate to God's promise to us through Noah in Genesis?

2) While living as a Christian, what does the fact that you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit mean to you today, and what spiritual strength does that meaning provide you?

3) Those of you who have already been baptized, please read "Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith" on pages 34–35 of the hymn and recall its contents.

***If you wish to be baptized, please ask Pastor Son.**