

BAPTISM of OUR LORD

January 8, 2012

Text: Luther's Small Catechism

Theme: "Living 100% Guilt Free"

**As I said in the sermon on the Day of Epiphany, today we come to the Baptism of Our Lord and we jump ahead 30 years. Jesus was Baptized as he began his public ministry as a rabbi. He was Baptized according to his human nature but God made it clear that this was no ordinary Baptism when from the heavens came the voice of God and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove.**

**Prior to Jesus, Baptism was done as a sign of repentance from sin. John the Baptist called people to repent and be Baptized and he refused to Baptize the Pharisees because they refused to repent, believing that they were righteous by their works. Now Jesus comes to John and just as he would later turn the Passover from a meal of remembrance into a Sacrament, now he changes Baptism from an act of repentance to a Sacrament. Now Baptism is not a mark of our turning to God, but a mark of his claiming us. That is the first lesson of Epiphany. Jesus reached into the cauldron of sin, rescued us from eternal damnation and delivered us to eternal life with him.**

**I invite you to open your bulletins where Luther's explanation of Baptism is printed and read the first part aloud with me.**

### ***What is Baptism?***

**“Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word.”**

**Just as God called light out of darkness with nothing more than his word, so he calls faith out of nothing in us. He spoke from the heavens when Jesus was Baptized and he does likewise each time an unbeliever is Baptized. He speaks faith into being out of nothing. It is the Word of God combined with the water that gives Baptism its amazing power to create faith. This is why we Baptize infants. Baptism is not a confession of faith but a creation of faith. Read part 2 with me.**

### ***What benefits does Baptism give?***

**“It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.”**

**God pulled us out of the cauldron with Baptism and whisks us away from the devil. Be certain that just as Christ was raised from the dead so we are raised up out of reach of the devil and can walk in the newness of life already and it only gets better from here. We are already immortal. We are already citizens of Heaven. We simply await the final fulfillment of the promise, the resurrection of the dead when Satan will be sealed in Hell forever and we shall live**

**together with all the saints in holiness and righteousness forever.**

**Read part three with me.**

***How can water do such great things?***

**“Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit.”**

**Just as the Word of God spoke from heaven at Jesus’ Baptism, so too did the Pastor speak the same word over us at our Baptisms and the power was the same. What he said to Jesus, by virtue of Jesus, he said to us – “You are my beloved child; with you I am well pleased.” God says that to you even now, as you sit here caught in sin and imperfection – but he knows that all that dirt is being washed away like bath water swirling down the drain. That is why Christians have no guilt. We have no reason to have guilt. Our sin is forgiven. Our debt is paid. It is our obsession with our own guilt that makes us so obsessed with the guilt of others. We keep track of who did what to whom and when because somehow, their sin makes ours look less profound but who cares? All sin is forgiven on the cross. You and I are God’s beloved children and because Christ has**

washed away our sin, God is well pleased with us. Finally read part four with me.

*What does such baptizing with water indicate?*

“It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be crowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

I have no guilt because I am washed clean of all sin every day. Should I beg forgiveness for stinking yesterday when I took a shower this morning? It's over. Get over yourself and realize that you are a prince or a princess in the Kingdom of God and while you have not realized the full glory of your position, you are already in the Kingdom. Your Old self has been drown and your new self was raised out of the font. It is finished.

Baptism means that as Jesus was set apart, so are we set apart, and it has nothing to do with our works or our behavior. It has only to do with God and what he sacrificed for us so that we could be holy. That's why we can live 100% guilt free. Every sin is already paid for on the cross. To be guilty of some sin is to say that Jesus did not do a satisfactory job but God, the Father, said, “This is my son with whom I am well pleased.” So he is clearly satisfied. What more needs to be said?