



Cleansed and Fed: The Sacramental Life God Has Poured His Love Upon Us

BAPTISM DESERVES OUR CAREFUL ATTENTION

REVIEW:

How desperate is our need for rescue from God?

Nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature.

Why is Baptism such a powerful means of rescue?

Connects us by faith to all that Jesus has done.

What are two key biblical pictures of Baptism?

The Great Flood, The Robe of Righteousness

What is sanctification?

A process in which God sets us apart to live as his chosen people.

Why is living a sanctified life a daily battle?

Saint vs. Sinner

How does Baptism sanctify us?

Double purpose of washing (See intro to lesson 2)

INTRODUCTION:

Name some occasions when it's important to *pay attention* to something:

What happens if you *don't* pay attention...?

- Sitting in a classroom
- Driving a car
- Conversing with a friend
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When does Baptism deserve our careful attention, and why?

All the time. Sinful nature

Sing or say the following hymn stanza together:

Built on the Rock the Church shall stand
Even when steeples are falling.
Crumbled have spires in every land;
Bells still are chiming and calling,
Calling the young and old to rest,
But above all the soul distressed,
Longing for rest everlasting.

*Nikolai Grundtvig (1867-1937)
Christian Worship, Hymn 529, s.1*

Grundtvig lived in the hey-day of religious *rationalism*. He wrote "God's Word is our Great Heritage" as a 5th stanza to A Mighty Fortress for the 300th Anniversary of the Reformation (1817). Both that hymn and this one ("Built on the Rock") proclaim the comforting scriptural message: the Church shall stand.

In our personal life

Think of the hymn stanza above. Why will Christ's Church stand "even when steeples are falling"? Who or what are the bells that are "chiming and calling the young and old to ... rest everlasting?"

Steeple are falling = symbolic picture of false teachings within the church, e.g., rationalism.

Bells still are chiming and calling = symbolic of all believers who proclaim the message of the Savior, whether in church or in their every-day life.

Mention some personal religious rituals people use (Christian or otherwise).

- **Fasting**
- **Sign of cross**
- **Folding hands to pray**
- **Praying facing Mecca,**
- **etc.**

Are there any wrong ideas that may come along with repeating the same rituals over and over again?

Mindless repetition, or worse, that the ritual itself has power in and of itself to help us. Crossing self before shooting free throw? Recent commercial: sports fans montage to the Stevie Wonder song *Very Superstitious*. True not only of religious rituals, but any ritual (e.g., cupboard doors must all be closed before I leave the kitchen). Rituals can be abused.

Daniel 6:6-10

⁶The administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! ⁷The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. ⁸Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered – in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." ⁹So King Darius put the decree in writing.

¹⁰Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

What danger did Daniel face for disobeying the king's order? **Horrible, painful death.** What personal ritual had Daniel apparently been using for some time? How did this particular ritual prove beneficial to him in time of danger? **Let class uncover every part of the ritual as recorded here: he prayed three times, on his knees, with windows open, facing Jerusalem. Helped him remember God's constant and gracious help in time of need. Even prayed with thanksgiving!**

Sing or say the following hymn stanza together:

This stanza fits well with this section, in which we talk about the worship rituals we use *outside* of church, in our everyday life.

Surely in temples made with hands
God, the Most High, is not dwelling;
High above earth his temple stands,
All earthly temples excelling.
Yet he who dwells in heav'n above
Chooses to live with us in love,
Making our bodies his temple.

Christian Worship, Hymn 529, s.2

In the morning, when you rise, you shall bless yourself with the holy cross and say, "In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen."

In the evening, when you go to bed, you shall bless yourself with the holy cross and say: "In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen."

- *Martin Luther, from his Small Catechism*

What is the origin of this personal ritual Luther encourages?

The origin of this ritual predates Roman Catholicism. It is a baptism ritual of the early Christian church.

Setting aside for the moment the potential pitfalls of any ritual, what are some benefits that could be gleaned from this one?

We all have rituals. May as well make them good ones. Crossing self can help to focus the mind. Regular use can be beneficial. In the morning - I've got a challenging day ahead - but I'm baptized. In the evening - I failed God again, but I'm baptized! Not required that we do this, but think of what we do when we pray; we fold our hands. It's hard to think of a different personal ritual for remembering one's baptism other than crossing self (I suppose we could pour water on our heads!)

Mention some other ways we may help ourselves pay attention to our Baptism each day.

- **Celebrate Baptism date, Post Baptism certificate (use bigger certificates!)**
- **Put dates of family's baptisms on fridge, together with godchildren's.**
- **Use baptismal hymn for prayer, etc., etc., etc.**

Sing or say the following hymn stanza together:

We are God's house of living stones,
Built for his own habitation.
He through baptismal grace us owns
Heirs of his wondrous salvation.
Were we but two his name to tell,
Yet he would deign with us to dwell
With all his grace and his favor.

Christian Worship, Hymn 529, s.3

In our congregational life

Read the Lord's specifications for Israel's place of worship while traveling in the desert.

Exodus 30:17-21

¹⁷ Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹⁸ "Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it. ¹⁹ Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. ²⁰ Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting an offering made to the LORD by fire, ²¹ they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come."

Why did God order the construction of a large bronze basin for his people's place of worship (**here: tabernacle**), and why did he command that the priests wash in it? What was he teaching his people? Why do you suppose he used this teaching method?

He was teaching people, sinners can't be with God unless they are cleansed. This teaching method was burdensome on the people! Carry a bronze basin throughout wilderness! Fill it with precious water in the middle of the desert! But God knows how we learn and how we remember. He used visuals and rituals to teach his people. True of all OT ceremonial laws, which were designed to lead absolutely everybody to a ceremonial cleansing of some kind at some point.

Colossians 2:16-17

¹⁶ Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Why does our church not have a large bronze basin like the one described in Exodus 30?

No more shadows; we have the reality: Christ. But the *point* God was making still holds true. Sinners need to be cleansed to be in God's presence.

What rules does God give New Testament believers concerning the art, architecture, and symbolism present in our places of worship?

None. It's a matter of Christian freedom.

Why do we pay careful attention to the art and architecture of our places of worship?

Though we are free to do what we want, we can't ignore the way God used such things for his Old Testament people. Even in the secular world, people understand that art, architecture and symbolism communicate in ways that the spoken or printed word cannot. Let's discuss some examples from our own congregation...

What are some ways churches can use art, architecture, and symbolism to help people pay careful attention to God's gift of Baptism? **See Essay p.6-7 and Appendix C.**

- Font Design and Placement
- Paschal Candle
- Music
- Art
- Ceremony

Sing or say the following hymn stanza together:

Here stands the font before our eyes,
Telling how God did receive us.
Th'altar recalls Christ's sacrifice
And what the sacrament gives us,
Here sound the Scriptures that proclaim
Christ yesterday, today, the same,
And evermore, our Redeemer.

Christian Worship, Hymn 529, s.4

Baptism: Fourth (from Luther's Small Catechism)

Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Review: What is contrition? What is repentance?

Matthew 16:19

¹⁹ [Jesus said to his disciples,] I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

John 20:22-23

²² And with that [Jesus] breathed on [his disciples] and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

How does God help a contrite and repentant sinner find relief? In what sense is the use of the keys really a return to Baptism?

He puts his message of life on the lips of a fellow flesh and blood believer. Baptism is a daily crucifixion of the old self and a daily resurrection of the New Man.

Discuss these three ways God invites each of us to live in our baptism.

- Confession and absolution before God
The easiest to schedule... God's calendar is always wide open.
- Confession and absolution before a fellow Christian
When a guilty conscience persists... (And be ready when the tables are turned. If a Christian approaches you in repentance, you have something more to say than: "don't worry about it; it was nothing." Use the keys!)
- Confession and absolution before your pastor
Not required (as in Roman Catholic Church). But this can be very beneficial. It's a one-on-one conversation with someone who is trained in gospel comfort. Make an appointment, and you can be sure your pastor will be happy to meet with you. He is God's called shepherd sent to serve you. You don't have to list every sin. You can choose to take a moment of silence for confession instead. Or if a sin is particularly weighing on you, you can put it into words.

As a closing prayer, sing or say the following hymn stanza together:

Grant then, O God, your will be done,
That, when the church bells are ringing,
Many in saving faith may come
Where Christ his message is bringing:
"I know my own; my own know me.
You, not the world, my face shall see.
My peace I leave with you always."

Christian Worship, Hymn 529, s.5