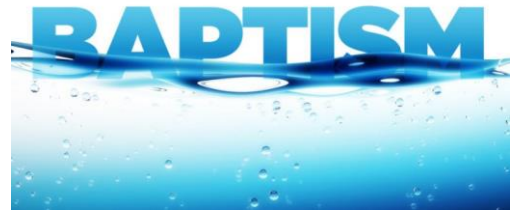


Sunday April 30th2023. Why should we be baptised?



You may be wondering why I am doing today's sermon standing in the Baptistry, which is full of water? I

haven't gone crazy, but I believe we need to revisit the symbol of baptism, as I am aware that not everyone here this morning or those listening live-stream, have undertaken the process of baptism.

Let's first consider the word *baptism*. In Greek it means to *dip repeatedly*. You would be considered baptised once you had been submerged and then removed from water.

Historically, the Jewish people washed a person's hands, feet and sometimes their head as they came into their home – this was showing hospitality. Washing then began to be more than just refreshment and hygiene, it took on a ceremonial role – we can see this in the first 5 books of the Bible, priests and officials had to undertake a ritualistic washing prior to perform their duties.

Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah likened physical washing to *inner spiritual cleansing before God*. People were called to recognise the state of their inner reality.

Baptism is an act of obedience.

Scripture readings – Matt 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let

it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. 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. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Matthew 28:18-20

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

Baptism is something that Christians have been doing from the very beginning of Christianity. People were being baptised by John the Baptist before Jesus started His ministry.

It was also part of Jesus’ threefold instructions to His disciples before He ascended to Heaven. Make disciples, baptize them, and teach them. Baptism is an act of obedience both for the new believer and the church. We baptize because we desire to obey Christ’s command.

Who can be baptized?

Scripture: Acts 8:34-39

The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with

that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Anyone can be baptised if they believe. You don't have to feel ready or worthy or wait for a certain amount of time. We heard in Acts the story of Philip and a Eunuch. After Philip shared the Gospel, the Eunuch stopped his chariot, and both went down to the water and Philip baptised him.

Baptism is discipleship:

When a Gentile converted to Judaism, they were required to undergo a type of baptismal ceremony called a *tebilah*. They would enter the water as a Gentile and rise out of the water as a Jew.

Some people were baptised into a person's name such as a Rabbi they were following. As it is with Christianity, when a person converts to Christianity, they are aligning themselves with Jesus, becoming one of His disciples and following His ways, no longer living as they used to.

Baptism is an opportunity to witness:

Baptism symbolizes that as Christ died, was buried, and rose again, so the believer has died, has been buried to self, and now has new life in Christ Jesus. To be baptised means you are making a public statement of your faith and belief in God and opening your heart to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Allowing your life and heart to be turned away from worldly things and towards God alone. A public statement that you were now to be known as a person who followed Jesus as one of His disciples.

Baptism shows repentance:

The baptism that John offered was a baptism of repentance for the Jewish people. Baptism can only point to the inner cleansing that only God can give to all who turn to Him – baptism is not the mechanism or means through which that cleansing will take place. It is the first step for us to look forward to the forgiveness that only comes through Jesus' work of salvation. A person can be inwardly cleansed of their sin by God, who cleanses us from a guilty conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit, because of what Jesus did in dying for us on the cross.

Baptism as a funeral rite:

Baptism should initially be approached as a kind of funeral rite where we enter the water to put our sinful self to death. We will no longer live as people opposed to God for that person no longer exists, that person has symbolically been put to death in the waters of baptism. But, just as Christ was raised from the dead, so too are we raised to new life in Christ as we leave the waters of baptism.

Scripture readings: Acts 2: 38-41

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.”

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Baptism and the Holy Spirit:

When you are baptised, you are assured of the gift of the Holy Spirit. You make a pledge in good conscience toward God – and He saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You are no longer stained by sin but have been cleansed from it. It is an outward sign of an inner reality.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the mark of Christianity, as no-one can enter God’s kingdom unless they have been born of water and the Spirit. Once we have been baptised and given our lives to Christ, our bodies become the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we ought to live by the Spirit of God and not be ruled by the flesh and desires of this world.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit is an intensely personal experience. You may feel the Spirit after being baptised, before being baptised as He urges you to commit to Christ, or gradually as you begin to live under God’s commands.

Song: as we stand to sing the next song, I invite any who feel the Spirit urging them to be baptised to come forward. We have plenty of towels here and the water is warm.

Baptism:

Ask the person to share their name, their testimony and why they want to be baptised.

Once in the water, ask:

- **Are you now trusting in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins and the fulfillment of all God's promises to you, even eternal life?**
- **(answer)**
- **Do you forsake Satan and all his works and all his ways?**
- **(answer)**
- **Do you, intend with God's help to obey Jesus' teaching and follow Him as your Lord?**
- **(answer)**

Prepare to immerse the candidate and say: On the profession of your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, and in obedience to His command, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Upon coming out of the waters, ask people to come to the front and pray for the candidate.