

Kingdom Stories Baptism

You may have thought that our series **Kingdom Stories** ended last week at the resurrection. But, you would be wrong. **Today is a culmination.** What you have seen is very much about the kingdom of God. More about that later.

I want to start by reading a scripture that we read last week on resurrection Sunday. ¹⁸ **I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.** ¹⁹ **I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power** ²⁰ **that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.** ²¹ **Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.** Ephesians 1:18-21

We begin by remembering that resurrection power is what we have access to as followers of Jesus. It is God's desire that we understand that what he wants to do in our lives is **powered by the same stuff** that brought Jesus out of that tomb.

Baptism is born out of the resurrection of Jesus and the power that he says is "for us."

For Christine, Bri, and Nikki, as well as all who are following Jesus...**Baptism should remind and motivate us!**

We look back at our own baptism and our decision to follow Jesus. We look back on **what he did for us** through his death and resurrection. We are reminded **who we are, person's in whom Christ dwells,** and what we are a part of, **ones who live in his unshakable kingdom.**

Because we are like the children of Israel, **we are prone to wander.** We are prone to **forget the most important things** because we get distracted. The **worries of the last two years** have been used by the enemy to get our

focus off of who we are. **We forget that resurrection power is “for us.”** And that no matter how much the world is shaking, the kingdom of God is unshakable.

Knowing who we are and where we live should motivate us to action. It should make us outwardly focused. Baptism is to remind us that we have been saved for a purpose that lies here in this world. We weren't just baptized as a way of some sort of numbing agent to get us through the pain of this life so we can slide into heaven. Those who have received such amazing grace then are motivated to extend that to others and to help them find it in Christ.

Baptism should remind and motivate us...**Because it's a sign of the kingdom.**

Restoration or new creation/being made new.

- **The Kingdom of God is a present reality and a future hope.**
- **The Kingdom is the restoration of God's rule and reign here on earth...This is over all things.**

Therefore, when we see anything or anyone being restored to what they were meant to be, that is a sign of the kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven.

What Christine, Bri, and Nikki have done today is to help us see that they are being restored to the people they were created to be. No, this is not the finish line; this is a statement that they are going to pursue this restoration in their own lives and as people who live in this screwed up world as restorers.

When Christine helps people return to health as a nurse and walks through their worst times with them, she does it as an ambassador of Jesus. She is a part of the restoration. She can point people to ultimate restoration in Christ.

When Bri encourages the terribly broken and hurting kids around her at Midland High, who are angry and don't even know why she is an ambassador

for Jesus. Her sense of hope and optimism is real because it is based upon her hope in Christ.

When Nikki heads off to MDOC Academy in May to prepare to be a corrections officer, God will use her in that unique setting.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Baptism should remind and motivate us...because it's a sign of the kingdom... Because it's retelling Jesus' story, and our story

Baptism is like a dramatic production. They are acting out a story. Yes, you can read the story but then you get to see people you know in a very visual, dramatic, and powerful way telling it.

³ Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? ⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Romans 6:3-4

- This is Jesus' story...
- This is Christine, Bri and Nikki's story...
- And if you have trusted your life to Christ this is your story...

See how Paul weaves Jesus' story together with my story, with the glue being baptism.

⁴ But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, ⁵ he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. ⁶ He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Titus 3:4-6

What image is running through that passage? It's water. In the Hebrew tradition, there were many who practice where water is used as a symbol of God's purity being imparted to us. Objects were cleaned in order to be

acceptable and useful to God. He is washing away what would make us dirty. He made us acceptable and useful to God.

Commercial...The enemy will use your past and also your present stumbling to accuse you of being dirty. There are people in this room right now who have the enemy accusing them of being dirty. If you have trusted Jesus, you are saying, "I get my purity from being associated with Jesus, he washed me and continues to wash me."

Baptism doesn't make you clean, grace does. Baptism tells the story that God can make us clean again. The water doesn't make you clean, Jesus does. But the water is the way you get to tell your story.

Remember Jesus; the last person who needed the image of purity and baptism did it so that we would follow him in baptism.

¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. Colossians 2:12

We keep coming back to resurrection power being the thing that brings new life.

If Jesus can defeat death, he can give me new life. In this cynical world, there's this nagging thought that people can't change. Yes, maybe so, but Jesus can change people.

Then baptism becomes a way to practice trusting and following. It's practice for following and trusting Jesus. Baptism is practice for following when it would be easier not to, or maybe more comfortable.

There will be situations where it will be harder to follow Jesus than baptism. But, you get to flex that obedience, trust muscle. Jesus is saying, "If you can get up in front of a room full of people and get dunked in water, then trust me I'll be with you when it gets harder."

Here's a phrase we have used in The Church of God for decades...**Baptism is an outward sign of an inward work of grace.**

Profession of faith comes first.

- **We dedicate babies**, or rather parents. We baptize believers.

Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"⁴¹ **Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. Acts 2:40-41**

Baptism should remind and motivate us...because it's a sign of the kingdom... Because it's retelling Jesus' story, our story...**Because it's about being "all in."**

However flawed you are, that flawed person is all in. You are all in for the transformation The Holy Spirit wants to do in you to restore, or make you new. You are also all in for **however he wants to do that.** Some of it will be **painful.** That's life. **He never promised to take you out of it,** but to walk through it with you and **to actually use you in his work or restoration.**

This is why we do immersion, it tells the story better.

There are people in **other parts of the world** getting baptized, knowing that this may cost them their life.

It's about trusting before you know how it's all going to turn out.

Next Steps:

- **Remember your baptism.**

Have you been living as if you have never been baptized? Don't be defeated, just repent and take the next step to get back on track. Maybe the last few years have been wandering for you. **It's time to come home.** Talk to someone who can help encourage you.

- **Meet with Tammy.**

God didn't raise you to new life and wash you clean just so you could get to heaven. Tammy is our **direction of mobilization.** Her job is to mobilize you.

You have the resurrection power, the Holy Spirit; you just need to know what God wants you to do and where he wants you aimed. Tammy is here to help aim you.

- Join a bridge group.

It is so vital that what we talk about in this room lands in a relational context. Just like God's love came in a relational context through Jesus. He didn't just tell us, he showed us. Christine, Bri, and Nikki have shown us something about themselves today. **The enemy wants you to be isolated. Jesus wants you to be in community with others.** That's not just what he taught, that is what he did.