

## Palm Sunday Baptism

Today is Palm Sunday. If you are not familiar with the story of Jesus, this Sunday **celebrates Jesus entering Jerusalem**. It is called the **triumphal entry**, because Jesus has become **famous for his miracles and powerful teaching**. It is also the time when there is a **large number of visitors in Jerusalem** because it is Passover, one of the Jewish festivals and holy times. **If there ever was a time when there would be fervor** about someone who might be, who acts like the promised Messiah or King, then this was the time and Jesus was the person. People thought he would come and **chase off the hated Roman overlords** and put Israel back on top, like in the days of King David and King Solomon.

**Oh, what a difference a week makes.** Soon they will be yelling **crucify him and actually doing it**.

**They had it right and they had it wrong.** They were right; Jesus was their messiah and king. **They were wrong** in that he wasn't the kind of king they were looking for. He wasn't about **conquering, fighting, and dominating**, and he definitely wasn't about **being on top**. He was the one who said to **gain your life, you have to lose it**. **It is better to serve than to be served**.

**Jesus started with a few people who placed their allegiance in him, even if he wasn't going to chase off the Romans and put them on top.** These men and women were willing to **follow, no matter the cost**. They gave up their lives in order to find life in Him. **The old person, who was about self preservation, had to die** so that the one who would become like Jesus could be born. **That is what baptism is about**. Dying, so that you can find life that is full and is connected to God through Jesus, his son.

**Baptism is a part of being a disciple or apprentice of Jesus Christ.**

**Baptism announces your allegiance to Jesus above all and commitment to follow him obediently.**

For baptism to be an announcement, then we need to understand that...**It's public.**

This isn't some **secret initiation**, shrouded in mystery.

Hannah, Quinten, and Josiah: They were seen by the Alma congregation.  
Dietrich was seen by all of you.

- Those people from Alma are still interested in my kid's lives, because they were there that day.

**Raise your hand if you've been baptized here** at Eagle Ridge Church of God. Now raise your hand **if you saw any of those people get baptized.**

**Russian/Ukrainian Church baptisms** at dawn before the KGB woke up and even cracked the ice. Sometimes being public isn't always possible.

**If something is intended to be public, then there is a reason that it must be seen.**

The people who see something happen are **witnesses**.

- At a **wedding**, they are witnesses to promises made.
- A **notary** is a witness that you did, in fact, sign this important document.
- On the golf course, scoring my only Eagle.
- Catching a 40 inch pike.

What is public and has witnesses **becomes verifiable**. In other words, **"yes, you did this and, yes, you said this."**

So not only is this public event seen, but also it **creates a shared memory with the group who saw it.**

- For American's, it's 9-11. We all saw it. Where were you when those planes hit the twin towers?
- Our cross-country camping trip.

**It's important that someone sees baptism. Jesus' baptism was public. If no one sees it, then was that statement made, was the story told?**

**"If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear, does it make a sound?" Baptism makes a sound that resonates into eternity.**

**When something isn't public, then the community can't create accountability in our relationships. If I tell, or don't tell the elders that I'm going to read a certain number of books, or do whatever, then they can't ask me how I'm doing. Or they can't challenge me in love for behavior that doesn't seem consistent with what I have proclaimed.**

To understand baptism as allegiance to Jesus above all then...**It's about going all in.**

Stepping into the water is about **weight transfer**. **Dipping a toe in, doesn't include this weight transfer.** The weight transfer happens even though we don't know how deep or fast moving the water is. **That is moving from safety to adventure, from fear to faith.**

The Greek word in the bible that we translate into baptize is "**Baptizo**"...to immerse.

**Going all in, being immersed better describes Jesus' story.** He came from heaven and totally immersed himself into our world and our lives.

**He was Christ, the promised King who came to initiate the restoration of God's rule over everything. That's God's Kingdom. On the cross He took on our sins, which brought death.** He was buried, completely given over to death. But then he was **raised to a new life, more powerful than even before. That is Jesus' story and part of the gospel.**

**The gospel is also our response to who Jesus was and what he did.** That also is about someone who **repents, believes, and follows Jesus.** That is also a life where someone **dives all in.** They were dead in their sin, buried. Then by trusting in Christ, who rose, they are also **raised to new life in Him.**

**When we go all in and follow Jesus into the water, we experience his purification...“washed in the blood.”**

Baptism is public; it is about being all in. To understand baptism we have to see that...**Trust comes first**...Believer Baptism.

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

- Define, believe in its context.

I want to read a passage from Acts that **captures an actual first generation baptism.**

As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, “Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza.”<sup>27</sup> So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship,<sup>28</sup> and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.<sup>29</sup> The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.”<sup>30</sup> Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”<sup>31</sup> The man replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.<sup>32</sup> The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter.

And as a lamb is silent before the shearers,  
he did not open his mouth.

<sup>33</sup> He was humiliated and received no justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth.”

<sup>34</sup> The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?”<sup>35</sup> So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.<sup>36</sup> As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There’s some water! Why can’t I be baptized?”<sup>38</sup> He ordered the carriage to stop, and **they went down into the water**, and Philip baptized him.<sup>39</sup> When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord

snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:26-39)

This man "went down into the water." And then it says he came up and the spirit confirmed that something **amazing had just happened**. Philipp was "snatched" away and in his place this man received joy!

He wanted to follow Jesus' example and be baptized. He knew what that meant.

"Baptism announces your allegiance to Jesus above all and commitment to follow him obediently." That's why it must be public, about being all in, and trust comes first.

That leaves us with one question...Why do we do this?

**It doesn't save you.** "Outward sign of an inward work of grace." (Newell) **Sacrament...**"a rite that is considered to have been established by Jesus Christ to bring grace to those participating in or receiving it."

**Ordinance...**"worship or faith disciplines, which have specifically been ordained by Jesus in his instructions to his followers...(A further description) We believe that these ordinances are symbolic of something that is happening in the believer as a direct act of God's Spirit. **The symbolic act witnesses an inner reality.** These symbols **affirm and remind** us of what God has done in Christ." Arlo Newell "Tell me about the ordinances"

**Is trusting someone, following their lead, obediently doing what you are told, natural or easy for you?** No, It's something that we need to work on.

**Why follow Jesus into the water? Because...It's practice for following.**

**Jesus didn't need to be baptized,** but he allowed John to baptize him.

**People needed to see Jesus do this.** He wanted to show that **he was obedient to His Father and to the calling** that was on his life.

**The things he was going to have to do down the road in order to be obedient and fulfill his calling would be much harder than going down in a sketchy river to be dunked on by some crazy prophet who wore weird clothes and ate locusts.**

**It's easy to say, "It doesn't save me, and it's just a show so I'll pass."**

**But, if you can obey him in this thing, then you start exercising the spiritual muscle that life is going to demand.**

**Why do we do it? Because...It tells the story.**

**It tells Jesus' story and it tells your story.** He died, was buried, and raised to a new life. **The old person you were had to die to selfishness and the desire to be your own God.** That person died and was buried. A new person has been raised up. You have been made new. Jesus said **"I make all things new."** Jesus takes up residence in you through The Holy Spirit. **Now you are no longer a slave to your own desires and sin, now you are an adopted Child of Jesus the king.**

**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. Col. 2:12**

**Not only are you made new, but you are being made new.**

- **You are new in how God relates to you.** The consequence of your sin, which is death, no longer defines you. You are a new person.
- **But, you are also being made into someone who will increasingly look like Jesus.** It is a present reality and a future promise, all at the same time.

**If you have been baptized, are you still living that story, the one God made available to you through Christ and is continuing to write for you?**

Down through the years, Christ followers have gotten to this issue by asking this question. **Do I remember my baptism?**

Here's another way to say it. **Am I living as if it never happened?** Or, are you raising your kids, who have been baptized, as if they never were.

**And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. Galatians 3:27**

**Is this verse reflected in the life you are living? If not, then you aren't living your story. That's the dead person's story. That's not you any more.**

What are you going to do about those two questions?

**Baptism can't be something you are supposed to do because you are choosing a team, or because your family has raised you this way, or as a mystical thing that gets you into heaven.**

Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? <sup>2</sup> Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? <sup>3</sup> **Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death?** <sup>4</sup> 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.** Read Romans 6:1-4

Did you catch that last phrase, “now we also may live new lives”?

- **This is not about perfect performance or simply trying harder.** It’s not “God is good and you are bad, now go try harder.” This verse isn’t telling you to “white knuckle” stop sinning.
- **Baptism shouts, “I am living a new story, a new reality that I have been adopted by the king, chosen, and loved.**
- **Now you don’t have to sin.** You aren’t a slave to sin anymore. **You have what you need.** Now trust him and let the life of Christ be lived through you.

**So what do we do about this? What is God saying to you and what do you need to do in order to be obedient and follow?**

**You are living the wrong story.** You are not following and allowing Jesus to change you.

**“I did it, but never made any serious attempt to connect with the body of Christ. I have made no serious attempt to allow Jesus to teach me how to live like him and for him. I have thought that salvation, and baptism were separate from being a disciple, “someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and committed to Jesus’ mission.”**

Mention 21-day challenge in its last week.