

**PRAYING LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM – Lesson 5 - "Holy Baptism" 8-13-17**  
Trinity Lutheran Church Norman, OK. Pastor David Nehrenz

**Scripture Texts:**

**Matt 28:16-20; Rom 6:1-11; Eph 4:1-6; Col 2:9-17; 1 Pet 3:18-22**

**FIRST**

**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.

***Which is that word of God?***

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew:  
"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." (Matt. 28:19)

Lord Jesus Christ, You instituted Baptism, which is not just plain water but water included in Your command and combined with Your word when You said, "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." Grant us always to cherish our Baptism, trusting in the promises You make to us there, and so by this gift come to receive the inheritance of eternal life; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**SECOND**

**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.

***Which are these words and promises of God?***

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

Lord Jesus Christ, by Your death You have purchased and won for us forgiveness of sins, rescuing us from death and the devil and obtaining eternal salvation which You now work in Baptism. Give us Your Spirit that we may believe what You have said, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved," and so receive these gifts of forgiveness of sins, victory over death and the devil, and eternal salvation, as Your words and promises declare. Amen.

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### THIRD

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#### **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, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three:

“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying.” (Titus 3:5–8)

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Lord Christ, it is certainly not just water, but the Word of God in the water that does these great 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. We confess and trust that with Your Word, this water is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of new life in the Holy Spirit, as Your apostle teaches: “He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5–8). Give us hearts of faith to cling to this trustworthy saying, not doubting but firmly believing that this Baptism now saves us. Hear us, for we pray in Your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.

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### FOURTH

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#### **What does such baptizing with water indicate?**

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned 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.

#### ***Where is this written?***

St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Rom. 6:4)

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Lord God, You have taught us through Your holy apostle: “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:4). Cause the old Adam in us to be drowned by daily contrition and repentance with all sins and evil desires, so that a new man might daily emerge and arise to live before You in righteousness and purity forever; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

In Baptism, the Father claims lost and condemned sinners as His own dear children for the sake of the suffering and death of His Son, and He endows them with His Holy Spirit. Baptism locates sinners under the saving lordship of Christ:

The full extent of the eschatological effect, forgiveness of sins and new life, being delivered from the tyranny of the powers that do harm and being moved instead to be under the lordship of Christ, all such aspects are attributed to Baptism, since by means of His name, the sanctifying presence of God is at play in this action.<sup>1</sup>

Adopted by the Father, we are given the inheritance of sons, enabling us to call God “our Father.” Baptized into His name, we now have the confidence and boldness to pray as dear children address a dear father. For Luther, Christian prayer presupposes Baptism. We call upon the name of the Lord because we have been baptized into this holy name. Baptism gives us the pledge that we are not orphans, illegitimate, or accidental offspring but true children, privileged to call the God and Father who raised Jesus from the dead our true Father.

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In the meantime, the Christian does not move beyond Baptism to some other project, such as penance. Luther was critical of Jerome’s imagery of penance as a plank that the Christian may grab onto for a chance at life once the ship of Baptism is shipwrecked by the hurricane of sin.<sup>28</sup> In unbelief one may jump overboard and perish, but the ship of Baptism is unsinkable. Repentance is a return to one’s Baptism, clinging by faith to what God has promised there: the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation. Jonathan Trigg says, “Progress in the Christian life can never be progress away from the beginning of baptism, but a repeated return to it.”<sup>29</sup> Thus Trigg continues to describe the circular nature of baptismal life in Luther’s thought as this is expressed in the catechisms:

*but the ship of Baptism is unsinkable.*

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Luther imposes a circular shape upon the Christian life. The Christian must never presume to claim any achievement or progress which places him beyond the call for a continual repentance of the past in *toto*, and a repeated return to the promise of righteousness in Christ—to the promise of baptism itself. The “circular” shape of the Christian life and the present tense of baptism are inextricably linked; baptism, even though it is administered only once, does not lose force after post-baptismal sin, as has for so long been held.<sup>30</sup>

The only way to live in Baptism is by repentance and faith. This is the continual return to Baptism.

Prayer lives by always returning to Baptism, saying “Amen” to God’s work of breaking and hindering “every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God’s name or let His kingdom come,” to use the words of Luther’s explanation of the Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer. This is repentance. On the basis of God’s reliable promise in Baptism, we can count on Him to strengthen and keep us “firm in His Word and faith until we die.” This is God’s good and gracious will. We return to our Baptism when we pray, “Thy will be done.”

How seriously Luther takes Baptism we can see from his *Baptismal Booklet*,<sup>31</sup> which was originally published in 1523. In 1526 it was included with his revised baptismal rite, and later it was appended to editions of the Small Catechism. In this booklet Luther urges that continual prayers be made for those who are baptized. Sponsors especially are urged to pray for those they bring to the font.