

Conclusions

One, baptism is really, really important. While we don't believe that baptism itself saves us from our sins, we do believe that baptism is the visible, physical expression of our faith in Christ. When we go down into the waters, it symbolizes our death with Christ. When we come up out of the waters, it symbolizes the new life we have in Christ. What's more, Scripture commands us to be baptized. Jesus told his disciples to make disciples, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19)." Baptism is part of being a disciple. In Acts 2, Peter preaches a gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost. Those listening were convicted of their sins and in verse 37 ask, "brothers, what do we do?" In response, Peter says, "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."

Two, by faith in Christ, we die to sin so that we are no longer slaves to it. It's relatively rare to hear a message of holiness on Easter, but if we're going to talk about the results of Jesus' resurrection, we have to talk about holiness. Paul says that since we died to sin and were raised to new life—since we're alive to God in Christ—we should live a life of holiness and purity. To receive and celebrate Jesus' victory over death but remain comfortable sinning is to presume on God's grace. Now, lest we think that we're saved by trusting in Jesus but then have to figure out how to live a holy life on our own, let me say this: we are saved by grace and made holy by grace. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to purify us, but we must surrender ourselves to that work in our lives. As the Spirit changes our hearts, we naturally begin to produce different fruit. Instead of sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, envy, drunkenness, and the like, our lives begin to produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 6).

Three, through faith in Christ, we are not only freed from sin, but receive the promise that we will also be resurrected. We are not just united with Christ in his death, but also in his resurrection. In

1Corinthians 15:50-54, Paul says, "50I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." It seems like we've had a lot of funerals lately and while death still leaves us grieved, we don't grieve like other people because we have the hope that we will see our brothers and sisters again in heaven.

Four, the only way to experience complete forgiveness for all of your sins is by faith in Jesus. We can't be fully forgiven by trying to do more good than evil. All of the good we can do doesn't undo the evil we have done. We still have a debt to be paid. Jesus paid our debt because he lived a perfect life and therefore didn't have his own debt to pay. In order to receive new life, you must simply receive the free gift of God given to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Response

So what is God saying to you and how can you respond to what he's saying? Maybe you're here and you feel God leading you to be baptized. I just want to encourage you to be obedient to the Lord and reach out to one of the pastors. We're happy to talk to you and answer any questions you might have. Maybe you're here and you're feeling God leading you to live a holy life in ways you haven't before. Maybe he's speaking to you about something in your life that he wants to change or sins you still struggle with that he wants to free you from. Maybe you're here and God is reminding you of the hope of the resurrection that is found through faith in Jesus, that the grave is not the end of our story. Maybe you're here and you've never accepted the gift of salvation that comes by trusting in the sacrifice of Jesus for you—by confess-

ing your sins to God and asking him to forgive you because of what Jesus did for you. Wherever you are this morning, I want us to pray together.

This morning we're going to baptize three people. I'm going to ask those who are being baptized to get into position and invite the musicians and singers to the platform. As they come and we get ready, I want to invite you to take your pew Bible and turn to Isaiah 55:1-11, which I want us to read together. If you've forgotten how to use a book, just turn to a neighbor and ask for their help.

Offer of Salvation

Isaiah 55:1-11 "1Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. 3Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. 4See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. 5Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor." 6Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. 7Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. 8"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "9As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."



April 4, 2021

Pastor Jared Stoner



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Easter 2021 #6

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Good morning! He is risen! This morning we celebrate the victory of Jesus over death, remembering that his victory over death gives us hope! This morning, we're going to talk about some of the specific ways his resurrection gives us hope. In order to do that, we're going to read several Scriptures this morning. Let's begin with Matthew 28:1-10.

The Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10)

Matthew 28:1-10 recounts the discovery of Jesus' empty tomb. ¹*After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.* ²*There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.* ³*His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.* ⁴*The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.* ⁵*The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.* ⁶*He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.* ⁷*Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."* ⁸*So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.* ⁹*Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.* ¹⁰*Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."*

Two Mary's, Two Soldiers, and One Angel (vv 1-4)

At dawn on Sunday morning, the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the unidentified "other Mary" went to look at the tomb. In Matthew 26:31, Jesus told his disciples that they would all fall away on account of him. Yet these

women remained courageous in their devotion to Jesus. Apparently when they arrived at the tomb, there was an earthquake, which Matthew explains further. The angel of the Lord came, rolled the stone back, and sat down on it. He was identifiable as an angel because he looked like lightning and his clothes were as white as snow. The two soldiers who were there to stand guard over the tomb were no doubt battle-hardened soldiers. However, the appearance of the angel was unlike anything they had ever encountered. The result was that they shook and became like dead men. The angel then has a conversation with the women.

Conversation With an Angel (vv 5-7)

It's a little funny that the appearance of the angel, which had incapacitated two Roman soldiers, was followed by the angel telling the women not to be afraid. However, what he said next must have set their hearts at ease. He knew that they had come to see the crucified Jesus. However, he said, Jesus wasn't there, but was risen just as he said he would be. In John 2, Jesus compared himself to the temple, saying, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." In Matthew 12, Jesus condemned that generation for seeking a sign. In response, he says, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Most clearly, Matthew 16:21 says, "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." The angel then told the women to go tell Jesus' disciples that he had risen and would meet them in Galilee, where it has all begun.

The Rest of the Story (vv 8-9)

In verse eight, we read that the women left the tomb, "afraid yet filled with joy." Certainly the sight of the angel would leave them somewhat afraid. Yet the news he told them gave them great

joy. What's more, the stone had been rolled away so they could see with their own eyes that the tomb was empty. On their way to tell the disciples everything that had happened to them, Jesus himself appeared to them. When Jesus saw them, he basically greeted them with a hello—greetings is roughly hello. They recognized him and ran to him, fell down before him, put their arms around his feet, and worshiped him. How could they not?

Imagine the joy and disbelief they experienced. In that very moment, their worst fears turned into their greatest joy. Their darkness turned to light, their mourning into dancing. As the angel had done before them, Jesus told them not to be afraid, but to tell the disciples to meet him in Galilee. Jesus' appearance to these women began a long list of appearances Jesus made before he ascended into heaven. Among them was an appearance to more than 500 people at one time, Paul says (1 Corinthians 15:6). The church, then, believed in the resurrection immediately—they saw Jesus himself. However, it took some time for them to come to terms with what the resurrection meant for them. There's a difference between an event and its meaning. In order to understand the meaning of the resurrection, I'd like us to look at Romans 6:3-11.

Death, Resurrection, and Baptism (Romans 6:3-11)

Romans 6:3-11 says, ³*Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* ⁴*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.* ⁵*If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.* ⁶*For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—⁷because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.* ⁸*Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.* ⁹*For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.* ¹⁰*The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he*

lives to God. ¹¹*In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

In verse three, Paul argues that in baptism, we were baptized into the death of Christ. So, what does that mean? Baptism compares the literal burial and resurrection of Jesus to the spiritual death and resurrection we experience by trust in the death of Jesus for us. Baptism doesn't itself save us, but symbolizes the work of salvation that we receive by faith alone, by trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus for us. When we go down into the water, it symbolizes our death to sin. When we come up out of the water, it symbolizes the new life we experience in Christ. Going under the water is like being buried and coming up out of the water is like being raised to new life. Paul assures us that if we have been united to Christ in his death, we will also be united with him in his resurrection.

In verse six, Paul extends the argument. By dying with Jesus, our old selves were crucified so to speak, so that we might no longer be slaves to sin. Anyone who has died has been freed from sin. You can't sin when you're dead. You can't murder, commit adultery, covet, or any of the rest of it when you're dead. But since Jesus didn't just die, but was raised again, we also have the hope of resurrection. When we are united with Christ, we experience both his death and his resurrection. What's more, once you've beaten death, there's nothing left to beat, right? Once you know that death has no power over you, you no longer fear it.

Paul's conclusion is found in verse 11, which says, ¹¹*In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*" So, just as Jesus died physically, we should die to sin. And just as Jesus was raised to new physical life, we should consider ourselves alive unto God. Now, to be clear, counting ourselves dead to sin doesn't mean that we never sin again. It doesn't mean that we're never tempted to sin again. But it does mean that we die to the deep love for sin and to the overwhelming power that sin once had in our lives. I want to read one more Scripture, but before we do that, I want to draw a few conclusions.