

“Baptism Reveals God’s Love for You!”

Matthew 28:19-20

2 Corinthians 13:14

Matthew 5:6, John 7:38

Matthew 10:42, Matthew 25:40

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Jesus final words to the disciples, **Matthew 28:19-20** “Go therefore 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 that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” The Apostle Paul’s final words to the Corinthians, **2 Corinthians 13:14** “The amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you.”

Both farewell addresses seek to communicate the love of our Triune God. God’s love is way to immense to be communicated in words. Even Jesus with his mind stretching parables, heart stretching love and soul stretching abundant life was unable to communicate the enormity of God’s love. The gospels abounding with miracles still only reveal a snippet of God’s love. The Apostle Paul wrote numerous letters yet they only tell just the beginning of the story of God’s love for you. The psalmist invites us to look at the splendor of the earth, the glory of the heavens yet even if you are standing on a mountaintop in awe and gazing at the stars in wonder you will still only catch just a mere glimpse of God’s love for you.

If your soul can perceive the image of God within you, resonate with God, the creator, redeemer and sustainer three distinct persons of God yet so harmonies in love that they are one then you are perceiving just the beginning of God’s love in which you will be immersed in heaven. Martin Luther said, “These are the three persons and one God, who has given Godself to us all wholly and completely, with all that God is and has.” The extravagant love of God the creator parent who made for us the cosmos and gives it all to us, a gift to be enjoyed. The amazing grace of Jesus who wrapped himself in our flesh to be with us, to experience what you experience, to think, feel, live, die and rise to glorious resurrection like you so Jesus can relate to you, guide you, perfect you and resurrect you. The intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit always with you, working in you, quieting the negative voices, constantly telling you that you are God’s cherished masterpiece crowned with the glory of God, always revealing God’s yearning for you to snuggle into God’s embrace.

Certainly if the disciples, the Apostle Paul, all the people and wisdom of the Bible and even Jesus are all unable to fully communicate the love of God then I cannot do it in a sermon. God knows this so God gave us a sacrament, baptism, water, a visible sign God’s redeeming grace and extravagant love. In a few minutes you will be invited to reaffirm your baptism. Since God’s love is way beyond words, way beyond symbols, way beyond sacraments, even way beyond the waters of baptism there will be several ways for you to reaffirm your baptism. Often to experience a new facet of God’s love we need to let go, to move outside of our comfort zone, to open ourselves, to be free. Often this involves taking a risk. I am taking a risk by inviting you to try something different in worship with the hope that you will experience a new facet of God’s love. Please let go of judging, worrying about what others think about your reaffirmation, worrying about if you are doing it right. Please be bold, take a risk, and try a new way to open yourself to God’s love.

My suggestions for baptism reaffirmation are to go to one of the baptismal fountains and dip your hand in the water, to sprinkle yourself, to make a cross on your hand or forehead, to splash yourself or to scoop out

water and pour it on your head, or to take a glass water drop; To go to the fountains and imagine rivers of living water flowing, flowing on earth, flowing in you, flowing to connect you with God and all the goodness of earth; To go to the entry way and use the water colors to paint; to get a bottle of water and imagine you are drinking in God's living water; or if you have another way to reaffirm your baptism please do it. You are welcome to do several ways or just one. The options I mentioned will be on the screen

Before you reaffirm your baptism here are some words and imagines that perhaps will enrich your experience. The Presbyterian Church describes baptism and what we expect to happen in this sacrament as follows. "In baptism God claims us, and seals us to show that we belong to God and are members of God's family the church. God frees us from sin and death, uniting us with Jesus Christ in his resurrection. By water and the Holy Spirit, we are made members of the church, the body of Christ, and joined to Christ's ministry of love, peace, and justice."

God's creation every plant and animal, you, all of us, are sustained by water. The beauty of waterfalls, rivers, lakes and oceans all flow with God's creative love. The Israelites were set free from slavery and propelled into the blessings of the Promise Land by crossing through the waters of the Red Sea. The water of Jesus spit gave sight to a blind man. Years ago there was a pool in Jerusalem called Beth-zatha that when God stirred the water anyone touching the water was healed. Today God heals us through the water of modern medicine. Water sanitizes, cleans wounds, rehydrates, carries medicine and fills therapy pools. Jesus turned water into wine to celebrate a wedding. Today we have boats, water parks, mega water toys, synchronized water fountain shows to celebrate life. Jesus gave living water to quench the thirst of a lonely searching outcast woman. Jesus said **Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."** Jesus said **John 7:38 "If you believe in me, come and drink! For the Scriptures declare that rivers of living water will flow out from within."**

The water of baptism is a visible sign of grace. Water washes, cleans, purifies. All our symbols of God's love, all of creation, all of us are dirty. Yet underneath the dirt is the glory of God's love. God is constantly washing us. Jesus lovingly knelt down and washed the dirty, stinky gross feet of each disciple. Wash away all the mistakes and faults of your father and you will experience a reflection of God's love. Wash away all the mistakes and faults of our elders, deacons and each of us and you will see people empowered by God to be living water to the world.

Make God a cup of coffee with water, even an awful tasting cup, God will beam with delight. Jesus said **Matthew 10:42 "If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded."** **Matthew 25:40 "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."**

I could go on and on for water is used to illustrate God's love 539 times in the Bible. All of us have our own unique experiences with water. When Martin Luther felt discouraged or afraid, he'd often splash water on himself and declared, "But I am baptized!" Luther encourages us to reaffirm our baptism daily, for each day we experience little deaths, loses, hurts and die to sin. Baptism affirms that God is daily giving us new beginnings, resurrections and renewed life.

John Calvin advised readers depressed by evil to "reflect that they are still on the way" to the "complete victory" that God promises in baptism. A sign on a church baptism font reads: "You are not your own; you have been marked out as belonging to God. You have been cleansed from your sin. You have been identified with the death and resurrection of Jesus. You belong to the multigenerational, multicultural family of God. Pause at this baptismal font. Feel free to touch the water. Dip your fingers into the water, as you remember that baptism marks the beginning of a spiritual pilgrimage toward our heavenly destination."

Let us pray over the water.

Eternal and gracious God, we give you thanks for your faithfulness, promised in this sacrament. We praise you for the symbol of water. Help us experience you through this sacrament. Use this water to wash away all our sins, mistakes, regret and guilt. Use this water to fill us with hope, peace, love and joy. Use this water to fill us with grace, confidence that we are forgiven, cherished and loved always by you. Use this water to wash away

disease, pain, imperfection and broken relationships. Use this water to heal, make us whole, perfect and united in harmony. Use this water to carry us out of darkness into your marvelous light. Use this water to fill us with celebration and abundant life. We praise you, Jesus, for giving us this sacrament, for being baptized in the waters of the Jordan. Through the baptism of your death and resurrection, Jesus, you set us free from the bondage of sin and death, and give us cleansing and eternal glorious life. As we reaffirm our baptism with water, fill us Holy Spirit, teach us all truth, reveal our gifts, so that what we say and do will reveal your glorious love. To you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, be all praise, honor, and glory, now and forever. Amen.

You are invited to reaffirm your baptism by answering these questions:

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?

Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love?

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love?

Please affirm your faith by confessing the Apostles Creed.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

You are invited to reaffirm your baptism by coming to the water to experience the amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit and much more. Reaffirm your baptism by doing one or several of the baptism reaffirmations listed on the screen.