

The Biggest Day of My Life

"He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." - Titus 3:5

The biggest day of my life is a day I don't even remember. It was October 6, 1991, an ordinary Sunday for most people, but for me, it was a day that would change my life forever. It was the beginning of something marvelous, and it was made even more marvelous because I didn't see it coming at all.

I was a 2-month-old baby on October 6, 1991. My head was heavy. My stomach was hungry. And my lungs were very good at hollering. Beyond that, I couldn't do much else. My parents would tell you the same. If there were two words that could capture the essence of who I was at that time, they would be these: dependent and helpless.

The Lord did something marvelous when he met me in my dependence and helplessness to save me. I didn't see it coming at all. I didn't choose to be saved and I didn't deserve to be saved, not by any stretch. Yet, He chose to save me at a font using water and his word in my Baptism on October 6, 1991. That day will forever be the biggest day of my life.

Some of you have a day when the Lord did the same marvelous work in your life. Some of you may remember it. Others of you may have no recollection of it at all. Whether you have the events and episodes of that day cemented in your mind or not, you can be sure of the work that Jesus has cemented on your life.

The day of your Baptism is the day the Lord has saved you – the day he met you when you were utterly dependent on Him and utterly helpless in your sinful condition.

Prayer

O Lord, you have saved your people, not because of anything they had done, but entirely because of your mercy. Help us to remember our Baptism and to return to it regularly as a source of assurance and encouragement in the promises you've made to us. Through Jesus, our Lord, we pray. Amen!

Questions

- If you have been baptized, do you know anything about that day? If so, what do you know? If not, how could you find out?
- What encouragement do you get from the saving work Jesus has done for you in Baptism?

The day of your Baptism is a marvelous day because it does not depend on you in the least. You did nothing to earn being saved. The day of your Baptism is a day when the Lord was the primary actor. The day centers on His work – His work for you.'

Realizing that your Baptism doesn't depend on you makes it a day worth returning to regularly. Days might come when your heart feels heavy over your own brokenness. There might be moments when you hunger for the truth about your place as God's child, but you can't seem to hear it. Instances might pop when you feel you need to holler to get word out of the Lord. There are times we continue to feel utterly dependent and helpless.

It's in moments like those that your Baptism stands for you as the biggest day of your life. It is there for you like sturdy rock you can plant your feet on and stand tall. You don't have to wonder whether the Lord has saved you. He did it the day you were baptized. You don't have to question your place as his child. He has made you his on the day you were baptized. You can acknowledge your dependence and helplessness and trust the Lord worked for you anyway.

The beauty of your Baptism is that it continues to be there for you as the biggest day of your life. Remember it. Lean into it. And live out of it.

If you haven't been baptized, there are loads of people you can talk to about it. I encourage you to have that conversation.

BAPTISMAL IDENTITY

Devotions

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Why Do We Baptize in First Place?

"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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

"And Peter said to them, '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.'" Acts 2:38

Have you ever wondered to yourself why we do the things we do as God's people? I'd be the first to admit that we do some things as the church that may appear strange or weird to the rest of the world. Maybe you've spent a lifetime in the church, so you don't think twice about it because it's all you've known.

But consider Baptism for a moment. Why do we as God people take individuals or groups of people and have them gather around a water source and then dip them into the water or pour the water on their heads? Of all the things we could do together, why do we do this?

Well, we baptize because Jesus told us to. Baptism isn't something we thought up because we imagined it would be a cool invention. Baptism is a part of our life together as God's people because Jesus gave Baptism to us as a gift. He commands his disciples to use Baptism to make disciples of all nations.

Fast forward to the book of Acts, and you see the disciples using Baptism to do just that. As he's speaking to the crowds at Pentecost, Peter urges them to turn and baptized. In his speech, Peter explains in even more detail why we baptize: we baptize so that people might have their sin forgiven and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have promised to grant forgiveness and your Holy Spirit through the waters of Baptism. Open our eyes to your word of promise that we might see even more clearly the profound reality of your work for your people in Baptism. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen!

Questions

- Have you ever seen someone else get baptized? What did you think in that moment? What did you feel?
- If someone asked you why your church baptizes individuals, what would you tell him or her?

Even if all we had was the command of Jesus, we would have a good enough reason to baptize. But we also have the promise of amazing gifts being delivered in Baptism, which means we have even more reason to do it. In your Baptism, you have received the full forgiveness of all your sin. It has been washed away entirely. Additionally, you've been given the Holy Spirit, who now dwells in you, guiding and animating you.

So, the next time you witness a Baptism, remember why it is the church is doing what it does, and don't let that moment pass you by. Open your eyes to the reality of something profound happening in front of you in that moment. It is so much more than it may seem. Not only is the church living out what Jesus told it to do, but the Lord himself is acting in an amazing way to deliver the greatest gifts a person could ever hope to receive.

What appears to an ordinary splash or dip of water is connected with the Word of God and his promises so that it might be one of the most extraordinary things the people of God get to experience.

Baptism is no ordinary moment. It's a moment worth remembering.

BAPTISMAL IDENTITY

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Newness of Life

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4

"Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead." Colossians 2:12

I don't know about you, but I love it when things are new. New car smell is one of my favorite scents. (It's real!) Stepping into a new pair of shoes is an other-worldly kind of experience. (Especially if they're new basketball shoes. For some reason, I never got blisters.) Opening a brand-new box of cereal brings me more joy than it probably should. All this is to say that I love it when things are new.

Our Lord loves it when things are new too. In fact, he has made a habit of making things new. From the beginning, God made things that they might live, move, and have their being in him. He made them so they might flourish and be new always.

We know that his creation didn't remain brand spanking new, though. When the curse of sin entered the world, all the things that God had made new began growing old. God lamented that. He grieved that. Maybe you've felt a small piece of that lament when something you wished would be new forever started to deteriorate. (I wish I never had to throw away a pair of basketball shoes. It breaks my heart.)

God decided he wouldn't let His creation waste away. God enacted a plan to renew it all and return it to its "fresh outta the box" state. He did that in Jesus when He raised him from the dead. Jesus took on the curse

of sin and walked the way of deterioration toward death. He willingly went to the place where creation was destined to waste away, but He then walked back out resurrected and renewed so that the rest of creation might walk back out with Him.

In Baptism, you walk the way of deterioration toward death with Jesus. Paul says that in Baptism we were buried with Christ into death. But just as Christ walked back out resurrected and renewed, so we too walk out of our burial in Baptism as God's renewed children. The way we now walk is the way of newness of life.

You are new because of your Baptism. Not only are you forgiven. Not only do you have the Holy Spirit. You are someone new! You have received eternal life in Jesus, and you have the opportunity to begin living in that eternal reality today. Yes, you do remain in this fallen, sinful flesh, no doubt. And you will walk the way toward death (unless the Lord returns before then) but know that you will pass through death and be fully renewed and restored just as Jesus is.

That's who you are as a baptized child of God. You have an identity that is brand-new – one earned for you by the risen Lord himself. Our God loves it when things are new. He loves to make you new.

Prayer

Father in heaven, you created us that we might live eternally in you and you have renewed us in your Son, Jesus, that we might flourish in you forever. Guide us as we walk in this newness of life by your Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen!

Questions

- What are some of your favorite new things? What of yours do you wish you could make new again?
- What does it mean for you today to walk in the newness of life that comes from your baptism?

BAPTISMAL IDENTITY

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Baptized into Something Bigger than Just Me

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit." 1 Corinthians 12:13

Unity is something all of us would like to see more of. Wouldn't it be great to flip on the TV and see a news story that made us go, "Wow, look how united we are?" Wouldn't it be a breath of fresh air to walk into the cafeteria and see groups of people we thought could never get along suddenly eating and laughing together at lunch? How cool would it be for you and your siblings to see eye to eye on something? (Sorry, that's my parent voice coming through pretty strongly. I can't help it.)

As the people of God, we can speak about unity in some powerful ways. We have the ability to express our togetherness in words I believe many in our world desire to hear. In a world where so many want to see unity arise out of division, we can be the first to speak about the truths that real-life unity can and does come in the gift of Baptism.

To the church in Corinth that was dealing with issues of division, Paul emphasizes the unifying power of Baptism. "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit." There were many differences between the Christians that composed the church in Corinth 2,000 years ago. There were different ethnic backgrounds. There were different social statuses. There were different levels of income. Some had been in the faith longer than others. None of them looked identical.

These Christians were good at identifying all the things that could divide them. In fact, there were real divisions between them. In chapter 1, Paul mentions that they were having arguments about who to follow. Some followed Paul. Others followed Peter. Others followed Apollos.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have sent your Son to die and rise that he might draw all nations to himself. Work to unify us around the promises you've made to us in Baptism and make us a people who view others in the way you view us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!

Questions

- Share an example of when you saw a picture of unity? What went through your heart and mind when you saw it?
- What are some ways you can strive for even greater unity in the body of Christ (in your church, your youth group, etc.)?

How does Paul bring these divided people back together? He reminds them of their Baptism. It was in Baptism that these people of various backgrounds and experiences all became one body of believers. In Baptism, they shared the most important thing in common: Jesus.

The same is true for you today too. In your Baptism, you are united with Christ, and consequently, the whole body of Christ too. You share the most important thing with Christians all over globe.

Christ is the great unifier. He brings people together from all nations. (Remember the command to the disciples to Baptize all nations?) He gathers them from every corner of the earth, from every background, from every social class.

That means you are connected to something so much bigger than yourself. Your Baptism builds a bridge between you and billions of people. Consider that for a moment. The body of Christ that you're a part of contains more people than you can count! How extraordinary is that!

This changes a lot for us. It changes how we view people who are different from us – whether their different because of age, or interests, or languages – whatever it may be. Baptism teaches us to look at one another through the lens Christ uses when he looks at us. *When he looks at us, he sees his child. When we use that same lens to look at others, especially those in the body of Christ, we see them as his child too.*

May the Lord open our eyes to see the unity he has begun among us!