

“Reflections” – Pr Jim Sprenkle – Pentecost 8 – July 31, 2022

- I. **Colossians 3:1-2** – ¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.
- II. **Some of us remember our baptisms.**
 - a. We come from a faith tradition that seeks to baptize people of all ages – even babies.
 - i. So, many of you out there do not remember when the pastor marked your forehead and your heart with a cross as a reminder that you are forever God’s child... or when the water was poured over your head in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19)
 - ii. Others of you came to know Jesus later in life, and perhaps you were baptized in a font like the one we have – or maybe you were dunked in a large pool or body of water
 - iii. Regardless of when, where, or method... as the water and Word of God combined, a miracle took place that God powerfully uses to claim His children.
 - b. When I first came to Ascension in 2007, Michele and I were invited to go on a trip to the Holy Land.
 - i. If you haven’t done that, I would encourage you to consider it to grow your faith and walk with the Lord.
 - ii. In most of these Holy Land tours, a trip to the Jordan River is scheduled
 1. Inevitably, the pastor will have a person from the group ask if they can be baptized in the Jordan – like Jesus was.
 2. Now, if that person is already baptized, the answer is always, “No, we don’t rebaptize because the first one is the only one that really matters, BUT we can do a remembrance of your baptism.”
 - a. In our group, many went down to the waters of the Jordan and were reminded of their baptismal grace as Pr Bohren applied water to our foreheads in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. I remember at least one or maybe two people who were baptized for the first time there as well.
 3. In fact, the place we went for these remembrances and baptisms was so full of Holy Land Pilgrims who wanted to be baptized, that they had a set of railings to manage the long lines – going down into the water and out the other side.

- c. The image of a person wearing a white robe and going under the water is good for us to think about today.
 - i. Probably few of you experienced that type of baptism, but envision yourself standing in the Jordan River... wearing a white robe...
 - 1. The pastor says, "I now baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."
 - 2. As you cross your arms and hold your nose, the pastor supports your back and allows you to enter the waters...
 - 3. You close your eyes and the water rushes over you...
 - 4. Stop with image in your mind as you are helpless under water

III. **St. Paul teaches us that baptism is a death... and resurrection.**

- a. As we read in our remembrance earlier in the service, and we read at most funerals, Romans 6:3-5 tells us that we died in baptism and were resurrected to new life in Christ.
- b. In the same way, Paul writes in chapter 2 of Colossians that we were buried with Jesus in baptism and then raised with Jesus by God's powerful work (Colossians 2:12)
- c. In verse 3 of our Colossians reading today, Paul says, "you have died."
 - i. What does this mean?
 - ii. I bring you back to the image of being under the water, darkness and cold have covered you, and the old is drowned... dead and buried.
 - iii. God used something as simple as plain old water...and I will say here for the record, any amount of water! Whether in a small font like ours or the Jordan River and fully under... as long as that water is combined with His Word – "you have died." (vs. 3)
- d. Before that moment, every human being is truly in a hopeless condition –
 - i. You see, people can debate this with me all they want, but the Bible is right when it says we have no good in us (Psalm 51:5) – not even babies!
 - ii. Sometimes people use language like the way people are born is an act of God – which certainly life comes from God – but we must concede that all life is corrupted by sin...
 - 1. Don't let people tell you that folks are born that way like it's good – no one born is good... but God can redeem anyone and anything by His power and love.
 - iii. So no... no one is born perfect... no one has good in them like they are starting with a clean slate and the world corrupts them – we are all broken in mind, body and soul from the moment we are conceived.

IV. **Praise be to God that He does not abandon us in our sin!**

- a. It says in Psalm 16 that I have nothing good to bring to God (v 2) but I rejoice because... You [O LORD] will not abandon me to the grave. (vv 9-10)

- b. God wants no one to reject Him unto death... He constantly pursues and seeks all people regardless of how broken and sinful... regardless of how far down the line they have gone.
- c. It is never about condemning people... it is about saving – that’s why Jesus Himself says in John 3:17 – “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”
- d. God seeks something more for you than the grave... than death... and that is why He promises the resurrection.
 - i. Yes, Jesus died to redeem us – to buy us back from eternal death – and then He rose again to give us the gift forgiveness He paid for on the cross (Romans 4:25)
 - 1. Which is the whole idea of a white robe... as Christ puts His righteousness and forgiveness over us...
 - ii. The point is that His death and resurrection are first experienced by us in the waters of baptism... as Paul says in Colossians 3:1 – “If then you have been raised with Christ [by your baptism]”
 - iii. The watery grave is not the end... God raises us up as new creatures – redeemed and regenerated (Titus 3:5) and alive... in Christ!
 - iv. This is the next image you can envision... as you closed your eyes and went under the cold water... the pastor whisks you up and the new Adam comes forth.
- e. Through the waters you came forth – just as God commanded – because He knows the saving power of little old water... combined with His Word.

V. **Take a moment to sit on the edge of the Jordan River.**

- a. As you look over the calm waters, you see reflections – even your own reflection.
 - i. But it’s not you anymore – at least not the same you – and it’s not exactly like God – but you are closer to acting in ways that reflect Him
- b. And yes, sin can rear its ugly head in our lives, but it never has the power to take us captive as we live in the grace of our Lord.
- c. That is why Paul says to leave behind the things you once did because you are new... you have died to the old and risen to the new – your resurrection life is different.
- d. I was talking to someone the other day who was making sure a friend had a Portals of Prayer devotional whenever they come out... and also visiting another friend who ended up in the health center – having meals with them.
 - i. When I said that doing these things is reflecting Jesus in the lives of others, they were surprised... but then realized that God has always been such a blessing, how could we not pass Him along?
- e. All of you have thousands of places and ways to leave the old and welcome the newness in Christ – focusing on the things above – whether it

be in your work or neighborhoods, your circles of friends and family, or your church family.

- i. Leave the brokenness and sin behind as you reflect His love, His work, and His ways to those around you
- f. And so, be reflections of Christ in the world – and never forget where it all started... in the waters of Holy Baptism. Amen.