

Message of Baptism

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Welcome to our baptism and membership reception service.! God has been powerfully at work among us and tonight we gather to give him the praise for that.

! It's no small thing when someone who is dead in sin is made alive unto God. It's no small thing when the blood of Jesus cleanses the heart of a sinner and makes someone to die to sin and to live for Jesus Christ.

It's no small thing when someone is given newness of life, when someone is washed in the blood of the Lamb and put into the body of Christ. And God has been doing these amazing works in our midst.

There's been a lot of noise and rejoicing in heaven over sinners coming to repentance. And tonight we gather to lift up our voices to glorify God for his works among us.

It was the Apostle Paul's desire for the church at Ephesus that they together might have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.

[1:15] When we talk about the love of God that sent his own son to become a man, to become sin, to die for sinners, that we might be saved.

That's amazing love. That's stunning love. And this evening we're going to hear the testimonies of five young people, some of whom used to yawn at that message of amazing love.

But God has opened their eyes. He's shown them their need for a Savior. He's shown them their sin and how Christ meets their need for a Savior. And so now they're no longer bored.

They are rejoicing in the Lord Jesus. And we're going to share in their joy tonight. Let's stand then as we begin and sing with amazement that's befitting such a wondrous story.

And can it be from the overhead? And we'll remain standing for prayer and Matt Barr will lead us. The Apostle Paul tells us that the gospel is something to believe in your heart and to confess with your mouth.

[2:35] Psalm 107 says, Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. Those he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy.

So God's works of redemption are not to go unnoticed and unpraised. And tonight then we will hear each of these five young people sharing with us the good work of God in their heart to the praise of the God who saved them.

So we begin with Brianna Kurte, the daughter of Wade and Tracy Kurte. Come Brianna and share what the Lord has done for you. No person knows when Jesus is going to return and bring his children home.

Before the Lord saved me, this thought of not knowing would terrify me because I knew the outcome if he would come that day would not be good for me. I am also unsure of the exact time God made me his child.

There was never a light bulb moment when I knew that second that the Lord had saved me. It was more of a gradual process throughout the years that he really started opening my eyes.

[3:46] My family has had the biggest impact in my life and I thank the Lord for blessing me with the family that he did because without them I would still be a lost sinner. I am very blessed that our Heavenly Father gave me parents that brought me to this church my whole life.

I remember growing up with both of my parents reading the Bible, Bible stories, and praying with my brother and me every single night before we would go to bed. I look back to the years before the Lord saved me, realizing even then that the path I was on was not towards Jesus.

There were multiple times when I would think about if the Lord were to come that day, where I would go, and it really scared me because I knew exactly where I was headed. I would always try to

put it out of my mind, though, by telling myself I have time, when I knew I did not. Even coming to church, it was just something my family did every week. I was never focused on learning more about Jesus' sacrifice to save my sins. There was always a verse that stuck out in my mind when I told myself that there was plenty of time.

It's from Hebrews 11, 6, And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

[5:00] I always knew that God existed, but never put all of my faith and trust in my Savior like I knew I should have. I really started to see the biggest change in my life and that the Lord was starting to work through me a few years ago.

During my senior year of high school, I started surrounding myself with new friends that were Christians. I soon realized that I was more myself when I was with them. We were able to talk to each other about Jesus and the struggles we were having in our lives.

I have been very blessed to have been surrounded by so many people that have such a strong faith in our Father in Heaven. They have helped me grow in my faith so much because they are constantly witnessing to others and seem to have such a joy for life because they know that our Father is waiting for them in Heaven.

I realized that the Lord has placed my family and friends in my life to help me grow in my faith. But before the Lord saved me, I never felt comfortable talking so freely about Jesus and the sacrifice he made to die for our sins.

In Romans 5, 8, it says, While we are still sinners, Christ died for us. It is so humbling to know that all of the sins I commit are forgiven because our Father sacrificed his only Son to save my sins.

[6:12] He saved me, a person that is so undeserving of forgiveness. Now I come to church every week wanting to gain more knowledge about our Father and Jesus' sacrifice for me.

Since the Lord has saved me, I have noticed a huge change in my witnessing about him to others around me. I now ask people to come to church with me all the time when I never used to.

I try to talk to more people about Jesus' sacrifice and see where their beliefs stand. I know that he has a plan for my life and the struggles I face are there to help my faith grow.

I try to face every situation in my life with new light and know that the Lord will watch over me. I have daily struggles and I know that I am a sinner that is not deserving of our Father's forgiveness. I thank him every day for saving me and making me one of his children. There is a Bible verse that has really meant a lot to me since the Lord made me his child, and it comes from 1 John 3, 1.

[7:08] How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are. I am our Heavenly Father's child, and I am so undeserving, but Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross to save me from all of my sins.

Thank you. Thank you, Bree. Nicole Heaney is the daughter of Charles and Karen Heaney. As most of you know, I have been growing up in a Christian home all my life, which has been an enormous blessing for me.

We have always had morning devotions before school and worked on memorizing God's word. I believe when I was 12, God started to work in my life. I hold on to the promise that says when God starts a work, he will fulfill it.

Especially during the year I was 12, I often came to my mom in tears, feeling overwhelmed and guilty of my sins. But being considered one of the good kids in school made me think of myself as a Christian already.

But I was continuing in my sin and wasn't making any changes. Sin was a little thing to me. Being in God's word, especially Proverbs, God began to show me that my sins are against him.

[8:15] He made me realize that I wasn't a good kid. I was living for myself. But through faith, Jesus brought me to himself and to the cross. My sins were nailed on him and will be remembered no more.

He gave me a new heart that hates sin and doesn't want to be a part of it. But it wasn't just the lack of assurance that was holding me back from professing my faith. It was me and my pride.

I was trying to live in the middle. Trying to live a comfortable but God-honoring life all at the same time. Impossible. This past summer on a Wednesday night, Casey brought up a quote from John Piper's book, Don't Waste Your Life.

Piper says, I love the personalization of 1 Peter 5-7.

Cast all your anxiety on the Lord because he cares for you. It shows how big God is. That the God of this universe could and would care for me is amazing. I am extremely thankful for God's saving grace in my life.

[10:02] No guilt in life. No fear in death. This is the power of Christ in me. Thank you. Thank you, Nicole. Kelly Barr is the daughter of Tim and Jackie Barr.

Ever since birth, God has been showering me with blessings. He's given me godly parents, siblings, and an amazing extended family, all of who have been encouragements and examples to me growing up.

Every Sunday, we would be in this church. Every morning before school, Mom would teach us from God's word. And during the week, Dad would lead family devotions. When I was younger, I dreaded all these times.

They made me feel guilty and embarrassed because although I had the good kid act mastered, I knew my heart was sinful, wanting nothing to do with God or his commands. The end of every church service had me cringing in my chair because I hated being told that I was a hell-deserving sinner with nothing good in my heart.

The thought of an eternity in hell was terrifying, but I had no desire to be in heaven forever either. For a long time, I was able to push all spiritual thoughts away, daydreaming in church and morning devotions.

[11:13] But by God's grace, there were people who cared about my soul and would ask continually if I was right with God. These talks, usually with Mom or Grandpa, would make me so uncomfortable that I would lie, saying I didn't know if God had saved me or not.

My prideful heart, not wanting them to know I didn't care at all about my soul and where I was headed. The problem was, they weren't satisfied with my answer and kept coming back with the same daunting question.

As I got older, sometime during my senior year, my I don't know excuse turned into an actual question I wrestled with. God gave me a desire to want to know him more and experience the peace he gives, but I also still lived a life of sin.

I told myself I wasn't confessing sin enough and didn't love God's word enough, so how could I be saved if I still sinned against God so often? Now I realize that I was trying to clean myself up, and then I was looking for spiritual fruit and growth in my life before I'd let myself believe that God had saved me.

Always sinning once again and concluding I still wasn't saved and didn't love God enough. It wasn't until Pastor Vaughn's message during his past visit that salvation became clear to me.

[12:24] He preached about how God offered forgiveness to us as a free gift, and all I had to do was accept what was being offered. How a gift is given out of love, and not because of something I did to earn it.

All I had to do was believe God's promise that if I came to him in faith, he wouldn't cast me away. I didn't have to live a sinless life first. Jesus paid it all on the cross. Nothing I could have done would make me right with God.

It's all the work of Christ, who lived a sinless life I never could. All these truths I'd been taught before, but never truly believed they were real. I don't know exactly when God saved me, but he's given me a new heart that wants to follow him, that takes him at his word and trusts in his promise that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them.

My mind still can't fathom why Jesus would die to take away my countless sins against him. All the times I'd heard his gracious call and refused to come, yet he still offered forgiveness again.

But I'm forever grateful that he didn't leave me in my sin. It's all because of God's immeasurable grace that I can now truthfully sing, Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

[13:36] Thank you, Kelly. Mark Barr is the son of Tim and Jackie Barr. Come, Mark. I don't know exactly when Jesus saved me, but I do know when I knew for sure that he had.

I had just witnessed a baptism and was in the car, jumping for joy and hitting my head on the roof. Before all this happened, I was far less happy. I was always unsure about whether or not God had saved me.

I thought I was a pretty good kid. Jesus showed me that I, too, am a sinner. He took my sins and gave me his righteousness. Now Jesus helps me to make the decisions that will glorify him in my everyday life.

Thank you, Mark. And then Brooke Barr, the daughter of Tim and Jackie Barr. Before I start, I just want to say that I wasn't feeling very well this morning, and it's only by God's strength that I'm even able to be here today, but I'm so glad that he's given me strength.

As I write my testimony, I am reminded of the years of my childhood spent at Grace Fellowship Church, sitting through sermons, attending Sunday school classes, and hearing others give testimonies at their baptisms.

[14 : 59] Every time I listened to those testimonies, I thought, that'll be me in a few years. But a few years went by with no change in my relationship to my maker. I was this self-righteous, moral girl who knew all the answers to the Sunday school lesson and was sure I would be saved one day.

God soon challenged my surety of my eternal destiny. I began to lose sleep at night for fear of hell. Loud, unexpected noises such as trains and trumpets reminded me of how God was going to return one day and could come at any time.

But as soon as the fear was gone, so was my fear of God, and I would go on in my sin as if I was fine. In those times of being afraid, I would ask God to forgive me of my sin, but my motives were all wrong.

I wanted to be saved so that I could be safe. I really loved my sin and had no intentions of giving it up. This constant roller coaster of getting scared, faking repentance, and then moving on went on for years.

There were times I left church feeling moved and as if God had saved me. Then the feelings left and I was still unsaved. Looking back on my life before salvation, I am aware of my selfishness and pride in every detail of my life.

[16 : 15] I wanted to be pretty so I could impress the boys. I wanted to get good grades to make the teachers like me. I wanted cute clothes so I could soak up all of my classmates' compliments. I want, I want, I want.

I was the man in Psalm 10-4 which says, In his pride the wicked does not seek him. In all his thoughts there is no room for God. Salvation, though God designed it to be simple, was a hard concept for me to grasp.

Sure, I knew what it took to be saved. I had 1 John 1-9 down pat. It was faith that I stumbled on. How do I commit my whole life into the hands of a God I have never seen?

How do I trust him when times are hard and I don't see him working? How do I fight against the sin that controls me so easily? I prayed for faith. I prayed that God would give me a hatred of the sin that I loved.

I prayed for him to take away my sins. And in his timing, he answered me. Pastor Alia preached a sermon on instant conversion the last time he was with us. In that sermon, he states that conversions may occur as quickly as the Ethiopian eunuch or as slowly as Lydia, who was a worshiper of God but wasn't saved until she heard Paul preach the gospel.

[17 : 31] I was a Lydia in my salvation. The Lord took his time prying my heart open and training my ears to hear his voice. I am so thankful for his patience in dealing with me.

But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. God has shown me how to trust in his unfailing love and to take him at his word.

His law is not a burden but a delight to follow. He holds me in his hands and will never let me go. Now I love his word and I am refreshed by it. Reading about the example of Christ fills me with awe at his character.

I fall more in love with my Savior in every new chapter. He gives me grace to battle my sin. John 15, 5 clearly declares, I am the vine, you are the branches.

If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing. And apart from him, I can do nothing. But I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

[18 : 33] My favorite chapter in scripture is Isaiah 55. It starts with these words. Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters. And you who have no money, come, buy, and eat.

God is still calling sinners into his arms. When I was unsaved, I remember thinking, what am I living for? Nothing in this world brings satisfaction. Why waste your life looking for it when God tells you he is the only one worth living for?

Come to Christ confessing your sins and trusting in his son so that you can say with God's children, if we live, we live to the Lord. And if we die, we die to the Lord.

So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Thank you. Well, we thank the Lord for what we heard. The command to all sinners in Acts 2:38 is repent and be baptized.

And the command to the church by Jesus Christ is to make disciples from all nations and then to baptize them. And then to teach them to obey everything that he has commanded.

[19:44] So these five young people have trusted in the Savior. They've given a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it is our duty as a church to baptize them. A joyful duty to be sure. To recognize the work of God that has been done.

Well, please take your Bibles and turn to Colossians chapter 2. This evening, in the few minutes that I have, I want to speak directly to those who are baptized.

Brooke's not feeling well, so she's left for the evening. But I want to speak to these four. Paul frequently brings up baptism.

It's not something that's in his mind that's left in the past. Never to be brought up. Some distant reality with no effect on your life today.

[20:49] And Colossians chapter 2 is such a passage where he brings our attention back to what baptism meant. What it means for them.

And what they should learn from it. And so, well, tonight I want to speak directly to you four. For all of you who have been baptized.

I want you to overhear, so to speak. What it is that happened. What was this a sign of and a symbol of? So let's read Colossians chapter 2.

We're going to begin reading at verse 9. For in Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form. And you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with the circumcision done with the hands of men. By the hands of men, but with the circumcision done by Christ.

[21:53] Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ.

He forgave us all our sins. Having canceled the written code with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us. He took it away, nailing it to the cross.

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them. Triumphant over them by the cross. Triumphant over them by the cross.

The first is that you've been united with Christ. You've been united with Christ. Look at this passage. In him, in him, you were also circumcised.

Having been buried with him in baptism, you were raised with him. God made you alive with Christ. Your baptism preaches something to you.

[23:27] It says that you are united with Christ. Christ. Now, when a bride marries her husband, her identity changes. When she unites herself to him, she changes.

And her name, her change of name reflects that. And so you have been united with Christ. And now your identity has changed. You aren't that old you anymore.

That old you that you guys were talking about. And that's what's pictured in your baptism. The old you drowned in the waters.

The old you was buried in the deeps. The old you was buried with Christ. And the new you has risen again to new life.

And so the old you that was condemned and unclean and guilty and empty, that you died. Died.

[24:29] And when the Spirit baptized you into Christ, that old you died. And a new you came into being. It's interesting.

In the ancient world, baptism was the word that we use, that we have for baptism, was used frequently in pickling.

You know, making pickles. And so you have a cucumber. And you baptize that cucumber into the brine.

And what happened was the brine filled the cucumber. And changed it. And now it wasn't a cucumber anymore, was it? It had become a pickle.

And that sounds kind of funny. But it is a good picture of what happened to you. When you were baptized into Christ. Jesus filled you. And overwhelmed you.

[25 : 26] And changed you. And now you have different qualities than you did before. There's a new taste about you. There's a new texture about you. You aren't you anymore.

Christ has changed that. And that's what your baptism tells you. So Brianna and Nikki, Kelly and Mark. You aren't you anymore.

You are a Christian. You've been joined to Jesus. And so you can't live like the old you anymore. You can't live like that anymore.

Now Christ fills your life. Now in Christ you have fullness. He's changed your identity. And that means the way of your life has to change. Christ has overwhelmed you.

And so you have to live like that. There's one central reality in your life now. And it's Jesus. And so love him. Obey him.

[26 : 26] Worship him. Follow him. Trust him. Rely on him. You've been united to him. Secondly, your baptism says you've been forgiven.

You've been forgiven. You've been washed. And in verse 13 it says, When he made you alive with Christ, He forgave all of our sins.

How good is that? All your past sins. All the present sins. All your future sins. You're young. And you're going to have a long life, hopefully, of sinning.

But they've been forgiven. That's amazing. And so your record, your standing, isn't what it used to be. And that's what your baptism preaches to you.

He forgave all your sins. And so you aren't dirty anymore. You used to be unclean. You used to be filthy with the guilt of your sin. But now you've been washed.

[27 : 27] And so live as a washed person. Live as a forgiven person. Even on your worst days. And you're going to have bad days.

No matter how bad those are. There's something to smile about. And the fact that all of your sins have been forgiven. Well, what will that mean for you?

Well, it should mean that you don't feel dirty all the time. After you've taken a bath, you don't feel dirty anymore, do you? Clean people shouldn't feel dirty all the time.

Satan's going to want to make you feel guilty. He's going to make you want to feel dirty. He's going to want you to think that God is still against you. But remember that you were baptized.

And that baptism pictures a reality. That all those sins have been forgiven. You've been washed in the blood of Jesus. Clean people don't feel dirty.

[28 : 28] But clean people also don't go jumping in mud puddles, do they? No, you want to stay clean. And if God in his grace has washed you, then stay away from sin.

Stay away from sin. And when you do fall into that puddle, run to Christ. Run right away. And have those sins forgiven. Third, your baptism says that you are sanctified.

And what I mean by that is you've been taken out of the world. And you've been taken out of your old life and your old service and your old slavery.

And you have been brought into a new life. And you've been dedicated to God. You've been dedicated to God. So in verse 11, it says, In him you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with the circumcision done by the hands of men, but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism.

Now, in the Old Covenant, in the Old Testament, circumcision was the sign that you were in the covenant, that you were a member of the covenant community, that you were set apart.

[29 : 42] You were a member of God's people. And that's what baptism is in the New Covenant. And that's what baptism says to you.

Christ has set you apart and prepared you as fully functioning members of this body. Fully functioning members.

He's filled you with the Spirit. He has gifted you by the Holy Spirit. He's given you abilities and talents so that you can fully participate in the church's life.

So you are young, but you are necessary. We needed you. And more than that, you are qualified to serve.

Not because of your great age and experience and wisdom, but you've been qualified by Jesus Christ. And you're qualified to love and help God's people.

[30 : 42] You were set aside. You were pulled out of the world and you were put into this community for that very purpose. You were washed for that reason. And so don't let anyone look down on you because you are young.

But set an example for the believers. Those are big words. But set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity.

Let your zeal refresh us. Let your love motivate us. Let your purity and service encourage you.

We need you. And Christ has sanctified you for this. And so live like that. Live like that. Now one final word.

For you who have not repented, not been baptized, you have not trusted in Jesus, you're still going your own way. Baptism also speaks a word to you.

[31:49] There is washing available. There's new life available. And it's not in the physical water. It's in Jesus Christ.

It's in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ alone can do this. We talked about, or I mentioned Psalm 98. Your right arm has done this. It has accomplished salvation.

And it was Jesus Christ alone. And that's what these people witnessed to. They were not saved because they were righteous. They were not saved as righteous people.

Jesus came to them as sinners. And he saved them. They saw by faith that Christ alone is the Savior. That his life, that his death, was the only thing that could rescue them.

They didn't work hard. They didn't turn over a new leaf. This becoming a Christian is not their self-reformation effort.

[33:06] It's not them trying hard to be a good person. I think they have admitted, and they would admit, they are sinners. They're saved by the grace of God alone.

And so they came begging. And they came repenting. And they came believing. They came trusting in the goodness of Jesus Christ.

And Jesus met every single one of them and rescued them. That gospel is still being preached.

That offer is still there. If you will repent and believe in the Lord Jesus, you will be saved.

There is a Redeemer, and it's God's own Son. Let's pray. Our Lord, we thank you for what you've done.

We rejoice in your goodness to us. We rejoice in your mercy and your grace. We rejoice in the grace that you've shown to each of these.

[34:14] We thank you for it. We certainly have no claim on your mercy. We've done everything to forfeit that. And yet, where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded.

And so we rejoice in who you are, that you are the overflowing fountain, and we are the thirsty people. You are the one who can provide bread, and we are the beggars.

Thank you that you offer to one and to all to come without money and buy. Come without any resources. That's the kind of salvation we need, because we have nothing to offer to you.

We have nothing to give to you. Thank you from first to last. Jesus is our salvation. He is our Savior. You have given him to us, and we love you. We thank you that he has redeemed us from our sins. I pray that you would please, please meet us and bless us.

[35:29] Meet us as we go on our way. Help us to rejoice in your goodness. And I pray for the nine that were added to our numbers. I pray that you would bless them and keep them, make your face to shine upon them, and give them peace.

Give them much grace as they have joined themselves to us. pray that you would do us good through them. And we will give you all the praise and all the glory.

In Jesus' name, Amen.