



April 5, 2017
“How can water do such great things?”

[Read Titus 3:4-8](#)

Is water a good conductor of electricity? Most people would answer with an energetic “Yes!” to that question. In fact, pure water is a poor electrical conductor. It’s not the water itself that transmits the energy. It’s what’s in the water that does the work. Water has many things dissolved in it. Some of those things are mineral salts that naturally dissolve into the ground water. Some of those things are chemicals and substances added by humans to either sanitize the water or to bring some added health benefit to those of us who drink it.

In either case, the things in the water make tap water a quite excellent conductor of electricity. That’s why we are always so careful not to get water and electrical current close to one another. When it comes to safety, water and electricity don’t mix. But remember, it’s not the water itself that transmits the energy. It’s what’s in the water that does the work.

This is a good analogy to Luther’s words about water in Baptism. “How can water do such great things?” he asks in his *Small Catechism*. It’s not the water itself that does anything, Luther says. We Lutherans don’t have stuff that we would call “holy water.” Instead, he says, the water is filled with the promise of God’s grace. The Holy Spirit gives us the gift of faith to accept that grace. It’s not the water itself. It’s what’s in the water that does the work.

With the presence of God’s promise, Luther says, baptism gives us a grace-filled water of life. That’s one of my favorite descriptions of Baptism—God’s grace-filled water of life. Luther quotes Titus three at this point. God “*saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*”

It’s not the water itself. And it’s not what’s in us either. The Holy Spirit creates in us the gift of faith that equips us to receive God’s gracious promise in baptism. That’s why we Lutherans baptize people at any age. When it comes to receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit, there is no age of reason or discretion that qualifies us. As one of my theology professors often said, God does not call the qualified. God qualifies the called.

So we trust that the Holy Spirit works in each of us at any age through that grace-filled water of life—“not because of any works of righteousness that we have done...” It’s not the water itself. It’s what’s in the water—God’s gracious promise. And it’s not what we do ourselves. It’s what the Holy Spirit puts in us in baptism and then daily thereafter—the gift of faith in Jesus Christ our Savior.

Let’s pray. God of grace and glory, in Holy Baptism you free us from the powers that want us dead. Fill us daily with the utter trust in You that only your Holy Spirit can give. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Do something: Contribute a couple of cases of bottled water to a local homeless shelter or food pantry.

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