



April 3, 2017
“What is Baptism?”

[Read Romans 6:1-11](#)

Luther tries to keep things simple in the *Small Catechism*. What is a thing? What good does it do? “What is baptism?” he asks. Baptism is simple water, he answers, used by Christ’s command and filled with God’s word of grace and hope. Not only does Luther describe Holy Baptism here. He describes what it means for something to be a sacrament. A sacrament is an earthly element used by the command of Jesus and filled up with God’s promise of new life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We will see this week that Holy Baptism is more than a one-time event in the life of the believer. Instead, Holy Baptism is our way of life. Daily we are buried in the death of Jesus Christ. Daily we are raised up to new life in him by the power of the Holy Spirit. I take time periodically to meditate on this gift of new life and what it means every day. I have been privileged during some of these meditations to have deep spiritual experiences of the Holy Spirit’s gifts.

At times I have experienced Baptism as if I were resting in a warm tub of water at the end of a long and weary day. It is a kind of bliss to rest in that water for a while as the Holy Spirit heals and nourishes me for my daily journey. At times I have experienced Baptism as if I were wrapped in a warm blanket on a cold winter’s night. In such moments I can feel the power of the Holy Spirit as an embrace of love and peace.

At times I have experienced Baptism as a plunge into the dark waters of sin and death. I can feel the powers of sin, death and evil trying to stay afloat in my mind, heart and spirit. And I can feel God’s grace and mercy lifting me to the surface and saving me from drowning. At times I have experienced Baptism as a cold splash of water to the face first thing in the morning. It awakens me from the slumber of sin and prepares for the joys and challenges of a new day.

At times I have experienced Baptism as if I were at a pool party of all the baptized, a celebration of the life we share, splashing around in these healing waters of hope. In my experience, Holy Baptism is all of these things and more. I take my inspiration in part from Luther’s baptismal prayer, where he talks about God’s saving use of water. That will be today’s prayer.

Almighty and eternal God, according to Your strict judgment You condemned the unbelieving world through the flood, yet according to Your great mercy You preserved believing Noah and his family, eight souls in all. You drowned hard-hearted Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, yet led Your people Israel through the water on dry ground, prefiguring this washing of Your Holy Baptism. Through the Baptism in the Jordan of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, You sanctified and instituted all waters to be a blessed flood, and a lavish washing away of sin. We pray that You would behold (name) according to Your boundless mercy and bless him with true faith by the Holy Spirit that through this saving flood all sin in him which has been inherited from Adam and which he himself has committed since would be drowned and die. Grant that he be kept safe and secure in the holy ark of the Christian Church, being separated from the multitude of unbelievers and serving Your name at all times with a fervent spirit and a joyful hope, so that, with all believers in Your promise, he would be declared worthy of eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Do something: Spend five minutes each day this week meditating on how you experience Holy Baptism in your daily life.

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