



April 4, 2017

“What benefits does Baptism grant?”

[Read John 4:39-42](#)

“Membership has its privileges.” That was an advertising slogan for the American Express credit card in the 1980’s. A harried business traveler returns to a crowded airport on a rainy night. He goes to the head of the line. He has a limousine waiting for him. He gets extra cash when he needs it.

The message is clear. With the right card, everything works out just fine. Don’t be part of the general population muddling along with some ordinary credit card. Membership has its privileges.

Luther asks an interesting question about Baptism in his *Small Catechism*. An old translation of the Catechism puts the question in stark terms. “What does Baptism profit?” We have been trained to think of our Christian faith in purely selfless terms. Words about profit or benefit or advantage seem out of place in our conversation. But Luther is not so bashful.

When it comes to Holy Baptism, what’s in it for me? Luther answers this way: “[Baptism] works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.” We Lutherans are sometimes terrified that we will be too enthusiastic about the promises of the Gospel. Such enthusiasm could lead to pride. And pride is regarded as very dangerous to our spiritual well-being.

Yet in our caution, we are too bashful by half. When it comes to Holy Baptism, what’s in it for me? What’s in it for me is forgiveness, life and salvation. A baptism is not merely a “dedication” rite. A baptism is not merely an official entrance into a congregation. In Holy Baptism, God showers us with the gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation. There is no reason to be bashful about that!

We have a great model in the Samaritan woman in John 4. It would seem that she told anyone who would listen what had happened to her. She was loud, enthusiastic, even pushy in her testimony. But who can blame her. She has spent much of a lifetime in the shadows, a damaged woman of less than stellar repute. She has been told that when it came to this life, there was nothing in it for her. There at the Well of Sychar, she heard another story about herself.

That’s the story for you as too! What’s in it for you in Holy Baptism? What’s in it for you is forgiveness, life and salvation! Membership in the Body of Christ has its...well, not privileges. Membership in the Body of Christ has its wonderful and gracious gifts by the power of the Holy Spirit. That’s worth advertising!

Let’s pray. God of grace and glory, in Holy Baptism you free us from the powers that want us dead. Raise us up daily to the New Life that cannot end. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Do something: Do you know someone who needs some good news today? Maybe you can share a bit of your faith story or a hopeful thing that the Holy Spirit has accomplished in your life this week.

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