

Baptism and Communion (11/1/20)

This week is Baptism and Communion. Both. We not only get to witness 13 people getting *baptized* between the two services, but we're also going to share in Communion.

But before we get there, I want to take a few minutes to *explain* Baptism and Communion. So turn with me to Titus 3:4-7, and I'll meet you there in a few minutes.

The first thing you need to know, is that . . .

Baptism is an ordinance

An ordinance being something we should do or abide by. Like a city ordinance. "Don't park on the street when it snows. Don't burn garbage in your back yard. Get a permit to build a house." Those are ordinances. Things we should and shouldn't do because it's the law.

So too biblical ordinances. Except they carry even more weight.

Because a biblical ordinance is . . .

- **A practice symbolic of the Gospel, commanded by Christ, taught by the Apostles, and observed by the early church.**

That's a *biblical* ordinance. And that's exactly what we see in the Bible regarding baptism.

Jesus said go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He commanded it.

And the Apostles taught it. Like Peter in Acts 2:38. *Repent and be baptized every one of you.* They taught it.

And the early church did it. They observed it. **Acts 2:41.** *Those who received his word [the teaching of Peter] were baptized.*

It was commanded by Jesus, taught by the Apostles, and observed or practiced by the early church. ***** Which makes baptism an ordinance. Something we should do. As a church. And *keep* doing.

The same is true of Communion. Baptism is an ordinance, and . . .

So is Communion

Because once again, it was commanded by Christ, taught by the Apostles, and observed by the early church.

Referring to Communion, Jesus said in **Luke 22:19b** – Do this in remembrance of me. Do it. He commanded it.

And the Apostle Paul affirmed it in 1 Cor 11. By instructing us in how to do it *well*.

And sure enough, the church in Corinth *observed* it. Which makes *Communion* an ordinance, just like Baptism.*****

➤ And just to be clear, those are the *only* two ordinances found in the Bible. Despite what some people think about foot washing or sharing a holy kiss.

Some people think foot washing is an ordinance because Jesus told the Apostles to do *that*, in John 13, just like he told them to baptize in Mt 28.

But there's no evidence that they turned around and taught it as a practice for the church. Or that the church observed it in its gatherings. Which means, it's intended as an example, not an ordinance. An example of humble *service*, not an ordinance to be imitated.

And the same is true of a *holy kiss*. The Apostle Paul mentions it – *greet one another with a holy kiss* – but Jesus didn't say anything about it. Implying that it's an encouragement to greet one another with warmth and love, not a practice to be imitated.

So the only two ordinances in the Bible are Baptism and Communion.

But they're not sacraments

Baptism and Communion are ordinances, not sacraments. It's important to understand that. Because the idea of sacraments is not biblical.

A sacrament is a rite or ritual in some religious circles, that supposedly conveys God's grace for salvation or sanctification, just by *doing* it. Just by participating in the act.

Like penance in Catholicism; self-punishment for your sins. "Do penance" they say, "and you'll receive God's grace." Or participate in *mass* and you'll receive his favor. Go through confirmation and you'll be assured. Undergo last rites and you'll be blessed. Be baptized as an infant and you'll be saved.

Some people say that God's grace flows *through* those rituals, those acts or works, to save us or sanctify us. Or that by *doing* them, participating in them, we *receive* God's grace.

➤ But that's totally contrary to the *definition* of grace. Which is God's *unmerited* favor, *apart* from what we do. And, it's contrary to the Scriptures. Like Titus 3:4-7. Take a look.

Paul says in the previous verses that we used to lead *sinful* lives . . .

[4] But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, [5] he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness [not because of things like sacraments], but according to his own mercy [his own compassion; apart from us], by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. [Not by the washing of sacraments, but the washing and renewal of the Spirit.]

In other words, when God saved you, he did so not because of what *you* did, but what *he* did. As an expression of his gracious loving kindness.

Which was carried out by his Spirit, *whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.* Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and our faith in him, God gave us his *Spirit* to save and renew us. Not sacraments.

So that [v7] being justified [declared righteous] by his grace [not our works, but his unmerited favor] we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. We might become children of God based on our faith and confidence in his promise of life.

All of which means that sacraments are unbiblical. We're neither *saved* by works nor *sanctified* by works. It's all grace. Start to finish.

➤ Which begs the question, "Why Baptism and Communion at all then?" And the answer, is to *reflect* that work of grace. Baptism and Communion are *evidence* of God's grace in our lives, not the means of *receiving* it. They're expressions of worship, not conduits of favor.

Which is why we use the word ordinance instead of sacrament. (**Summary**) Because ordinance conveys the importance of *participating* in Baptism and Communion, but stops short of implying that by doing so we are somehow infused with grace. Somehow saved or sanctified by the act. We're not. They're symbols, not conduits.

Which brings us to the next point.

They're symbols of the New Covenant

The Gospel. The new promise of salvation that God offers in Christ. Who took on flesh, dwelt among us, died for our sins, and rose again for our life. So that by believing in who Jesus is and what he did, and turning from our sin, we might be saved. Saved from hell and guaranteed heaven. That's the New Covenant. The Gospel.

And both Baptism and Communion symbolize it. Baptism by picturing Christ's death, burial, and resurrection; and Communion by representing his body and blood, broken and shed for our sins.

➤ But there's a slight difference between the two. Baptism is symbolic of our *entrance* into the New Covenant (**Baptism – Entrance**), while Communion symbolizes the *means* by which it happened (**Communion – Means**).

You see, baptism is an outward symbol of the inward transformation that took place when God *saved* you. He washed your sins away and gave you new life. Symbolized by the water, and coming up out of it. So baptism is symbolic of your *entrance* into the New Covenant.

Meanwhile, Communion is symbolic of the *means* by which he saved you. Namely, the broken body and shed blood of Jesus on the cross. That's the *means* by which we enter the New Covenant.

So Baptism symbolizes our *entrance*, while Communion symbolizes the *means*.

And *that* means, that . . .

Both are for believers

Both are ordinances, both are symbols, and both are for believers. And *only* believers.

If baptism is a symbol of our forgiveness of sins and new life in Christ, then it's meaningful *only* for those who have experienced it. Only for people who have *received* those things. Otherwise, by participating, you'd be saying something outwardly that's not true inwardly.

So it's no surprise that the pattern in Scripture is belief first, and *then* baptism. It's only for believers.

➤ And *all* believers. It's not optional. In fact, baptism is so closely associated with salvation in the Bible, that under normal circumstances an "*un-baptized believer*" is a contradiction of terms.

Not that it's a *requirement* for salvation; that would make it a work (Titus 3:5). Rather, it's the primary means in the Bible of *proclaiming* your salvation.

So it's *only* for believers, and it's for *all* believers.

➤ And the same is true of Communion. When we eat the bread and drink the cup, we not only *remember* Christ's death on our behalf, but we *proclaim* it. That's what the Bible says. We *proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*. (1 Cor 11:26) We tell the old, old story of the old rugged cross every time we partake.

Which is why, just like baptism, it's for *all* believers, and *only* believers. All, because we're *all* responsible to proclaim the Gospel. And *only* for believers, because you have nothing to remember and celebrate if you *don't* believe. (**Summary**)

➤ So with all that in mind, we have the privilege of witnessing 8/5 baptisms this morning, and rejoicing in God's work of grace in their lives.

And I want you to know that each and every one of them has spent a good deal of time and effort working through a Bible study to understand what baptism is, what they're doing, and why.

And as you watch, let me encourage you to remember your *own* baptism. And prepare your heart to participate in Communion. And if you've never *been* baptized as a believer, make a commitment to do so next time.

[BAPTISMS]