



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sermon Series: "I Believe." The Nicene Creed
(Pentecost, 2025)
"Humanity and Sin."

□ **Day #1—Monday, November 17th. Read: Matthew 28.16-20; 2 Corinthians 5.17. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

This week, we continue to focus on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, specifically through the Spirit's work of creating faith in the believer and then assembling these believers in the church. As Lutherans, we believe that the very definition of the church is a community where the Gospel is proclaimed and the Sacraments are rightly administered according to the Word of God. One of the Sacraments that the church administers is *Holy Baptism*. In the *Nicene Creed*, we confess this when we say...

...*We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins...*

Baptism in the Lutheran Church is one of two *Sacraments* (Holy Communion being the other). The word *Sacrament* is derived from the Greek μυστήριον (*mysterion*), meaning "mystery" or "something sacred." In Latin, μυστήριον is translated *sacramentum* (English: *Sacrament*). A Sacrament is defined as:

(1) A pledge or security deposited...in public keeping by the parties in a lawsuit and forfeited to a sacred purpose; (2) as the oath taken by a Roman soldier to the emperor, and thence to any oath. These ideas later combined to produce the concept of a sacred rite which was a pledge or token, the receipt of which involved an oath of loyalty, and this led in time to the limitation of the word "sacrament" to the two major rites of divine institution, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹

As one of the two Sacraments in the church, Martin Luther said this about Baptism:

"Indeed if I had the matter under my control, I would not want God speak to me from heaven or appear to me, but I would want—and my daily prayers are directed to this end—that I might have the proper respect and true appreciation for the gift of Baptism."

The word *Baptism* derives from the Greek word, βαπτίζω (*baptizo*), meaning "to dip" (in water) or "to bathe." Thus, baptism is a *holy washing*, "a spiritual bath that cleanses us from sin...When you are baptized, God's name is poured on you with the water. In the Bible, having God's name on you is a blessing."² As Lutheran theologian, Dr. A.L. Barry writes:

In and through Baptism, God cleanses us from all of our sins, snatches us from the power of Satan, and gives us everlasting life. It is all God's doing as He gives us His blessing. It is His promise. In Baptism, our Triune God imparts to each of us personally the gifts the Lord Jesus Christ won for the world through His life, suffering, death, and resurrection. Please see especially Gal.3:27; Col.1:13-14; 1 Peter 3:21; Titus 3:5-7 and 1 Cor.6:11.³

Consider/Reflect: Martin Luther commented that the Sacraments were, "Instituted by God; through which God Himself has joined His Word of promise to the visible element; and by which He offers, gives and seals the forgiveness of sin earned by Christ."⁴

□ **Day #2—Tuesday, November 18th. Read: Acts 2.36-41; Ephesians 4.4-6; Titus 3.3-7. —Examine: The Text and its Context.**

Baptism and the forgiveness, or remission, of sins, have always been connected. In Scripture, baptism is referred to as the "*washing of regeneration and renewal*." Martin Luther, asking and answering the question about how baptism (water) can accomplish this, explains...

1 R.J. Coates, "Sacraments." In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1996).

2 Charles Lehman. *Lutheranism 101: Holy Baptism* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013).

3 A.L. Barry. "*What About...Holy Baptism*" (www.lcms.org).

4 Martin Luther. *Luther's Small Catechism With Explanation* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005).

How can water do such great things? Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three:

"He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." This is a trustworthy saying. (Titus 3:5–8)⁵

Baptism brings us into a relationship with our Heavenly Father through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through Christ, we are forgiven, washed clean, and give new life! This divine action in baptism, is articulated both in the words of the creed, as well as in the words of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. In the Nicene Creed, we acknowledge baptism for forgiveness. In the Sacrament of Baptism, we are baptized *in* the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As pastor and theologian, Kevin DeYoung describes:

So there's a connection with baptism and the remission of sins, but how?... Now the Nicene Creed was originally written in Greek. That word translated... "for" is a fine translation. It's the Greek word, preposition, *eis*. Looks like e-i-s, transliterated, which can mean "for" or "in" or "into." It is the common preposition used with baptism and baptismal formulas. So Matthew 28, the Great Commission, baptize them in or into the name, that's the preposition *eis*. Romans 6, baptized into His death. 1 Corinthians 1 also... All of those use that preposition "*eis*." So to be baptized "*eis*," for/in/into, to be baptized in the triune name or into Christ's death is to be made the possession of God, or to be bound up in the work of Christ. That little preposition speaks of incorporation or identification. When you're baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it identifies you as belonging to God. The physical sign points to these spiritual realities. So in the same way to be baptized "*eis*," that's the Greek, for or in or into the remission of sins does not mean that the act of water automatically in itself forgives, but rather it identifies, it appoints to that forgiveness, it identifies us as God's beloved people.⁶

In the creed, we also confess that baptism is *one* baptism—singular. What are we saying here? Some scholars have suggested that this might have been a reaction to the belief in the early church that those who were baptized by bishops (pastors) who abandoned the faith under persecution, needed to be rebaptized. Others pointed to the biblical truth and witness that there is in reality only one, true baptism...

...because there is only one holy catholic church throughout the world based on the faith taught by the apostles. The apostle Paul makes this fundamental connection when he speaks of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Ephesians 4.5)... The one church has one faith because it has only one Lord in whom to believe and be baptized (Mark 16.16)... It is the same baptism wherever it is the same Lord—so it is one baptism, not a different baptism in different churches, as if different congregations of the one Body of Christ each had a different head."⁷

Question/Reflect: What memories do you have about Baptism? Yours? Your children/grandchildren? Friends? What is the most significant memory you have about Baptism?

□ Day #3—Wednesday, November 19th. Read: Matthew 3.13-15. –Explore: The background to this text(s).

Why did Jesus have to be baptized? Certainly not because Jesus committed sin and needed the forgiveness of sins. Scholars have suggested six reasons why Jesus was baptized:

1. Obligation—"to fulfill all righteousness" (See John 8:29 and tomorrow).
2. Consecration—the Old Testament priest was washed, then anointed for his priestly duties. Jesus submitted to water Baptism; after that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus. (See Exodus 29).
3. Commendation—Jesus gave His approval of John's ministry and thus obligated the people to listen to John and obey him. Instead, the religious leaders rejected John's Baptism (Matthew 21:23–27).
4. Proclamation—this was John's official introduction of Jesus to the Jewish nation. (See John 1:31).
5. Anticipation—this water Baptism looked forward to His Baptism of suffering for us on the cross (Luke 12:50). Jesus fulfilled all righteousness through His sacrificial death on Calvary.
6. Identification—Jesus identified Himself with sinful men. Immediately after His Baptism, the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. There may be here a picture of the "scapegoat" that symbolically carried the nation's sins into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:1–10).

⁵ Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism*.

⁶ Kevin DeYoung, *The Nicene Creed*. <https://clearlyreformed.org/sermon/the-nicene-creed-one-church-and-one-baptism>.

⁷ Phillip Cary, *The Nicene Creed* (Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press, 2023).

Jesus' Baptism was the sign God had promised to give John to identify Jesus (John 1:31–34). Though Jesus and John were related (Luke 1:36), it is likely they had not seen each other for years. Even if John did know Jesus in the flesh, he would want the divine assurance from heaven.

John misunderstood Jesus' intentions at his Baptism. John understood baptism to represent an act of repentance, and thus, protested Jesus' baptism. Again, Jesus' baptism was not about His sin (He had none) but our sin. John the Baptist obediently baptized Jesus, while acknowledging that he needed to be cleansed by Jesus, and not the other way around. Jesus came to identify with his people in righteous alignment with God's purposes. He came to "do everything that is right" (3:15) by identifying himself with the righteous remnant of God's chosen people—the people he had come to represent and save (Matthew 12:18–21).

Consider/Reflect: The Greek word "*baptizo*" literally means to "to dip, to immerse." In the ancient world water was a symbol of chaos; Jesus goes into the water, into the chaos of this world for you and me and comes out of the water (chaos) as victorious King!

□ **Day #4--Thursday, November 20th. Read: Matthew 3.16-17. -Explore: The background to this text(s).**

As we have already examined, Jesus' response to John's resistance was that it was fitting for Him to be baptized in order to *fulfill all righteousness*. Let us again consider what this could mean. The Law included no requirements about baptism, so Jesus could not have had in view anything pertaining to Levitical righteousness. However, John's message was a message of repentance, and those experiencing it were looking forward to a coming Messiah who would be righteous and who would bring in righteousness. If the Messiah were to provide righteousness for sinners, He must be identified with sinners.

It was therefore God's will for Jesus to be baptized by John in order to be identified with sinners. This is the power of baptism for us today. When we are baptized, we identify with Jesus just like He identified with us in His baptism. The huge difference is in the status of the person baptized. We sinful humans are baptized because we need Jesus and His work of salvation. The sinless Jesus is baptized so that we may receive His work of salvation!

As we explored on Tuesday, when we are baptized, we are baptized *into* the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; we are *incorporated* into the life of the Trinity! We become God's possession! In the waters of baptism, the "old Adam" (human nature) is "drowned" so that the life of the "New Adam," Jesus Christ, may live in and through us! We are made members of the church, the body of Christ, equipped by Jesus to grow in faith, love and obedience to the will of God. In Holy Baptism:

...we are buried with Christ, and in Baptism we are raised with Christ. His death and resurrection are made our own, and because of that fact, through our entire life, we are able to say, "I am baptized!" Having been buried with Christ into His death we do not have to be afraid of the tomb in which we will rest one day. Christ has already been there.

In Holy Baptism we have passed through His grave into His resurrection.⁸

Consider/Reflect: Jesus' baptism was for you. He identified with you even then and chose to fulfill all righteousness so that you could be declared righteous when you stand before God. Reflect upon the significance of this act by Jesus. How does this impact your understanding of Jesus' love for you and following Jesus?

□ **Day #5— Friday, November 21st. Read Again: Matthew 3.16-17. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

One of the significant realities found in Jesus' baptism is the *affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity*. In fact, the baptism of Jesus gives one of the clearest illustrations of the doctrine of the Trinity. At Jesus' baptism, all three *persons of the Trinity* appeared at once:

*The Father speaking from heaven (3:17)

*The Son coming out of the water (3:16)

*The Holy Spirit descending from heaven (3:16)

Both the Father and the Spirit signified their approval of Jesus' action (compare Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; and John 1:31–34). On three unique occasions, the Father spoke from heaven: here at Jesus' baptism, at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3), and as Jesus approached the cross (John 12:27–30). In this passage, God's voice from heaven identifying Jesus as His Son is the public announcement that the Messianic Age is about to dawn. The Father's statement from heaven seems to be an echo of Psalm 2:7: "*The Lord hath said unto Me, 'Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee.'*"

8 Barry, "*What About...Holy Baptism?*"

God's statement in this passage also relates Jesus Christ to the "Suffering Servant" prophesied in Isaiah 40–53. In Matthew 12:18, Matthew quoted from Isaiah 42.1–3, where the Messiah-Servant is called "*My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased.*" The Servant described in Isaiah is humble, rejected, made to suffer and die, but is also seen to come forth in victory. Again, we see the clear connection between the prophecy in Isaiah and the fulfillment by Jesus through His life, death, burial, and resurrection. One other truth we witness in this divine pleasure toward Jesus: God is pleased with His Son before Jesus begins His ministry...another reality of God's *grace-full* character. A divine character Jesus will reveal to the world!

Consider/Reflect: "The fact that all four Gospels report the Baptism of Jesus points to its importance. Luther captured the primary meaning for His Baptism: "[Christ] accepted it from John for the reason that he was entering into our stead, indeed, our person, that is, becoming a sinner for us, taking upon himself the sins which he had not committed, and wiping them out and drowning them in his holy baptism" (AE 51:315)."

□ **Day #6-Saturday, November 22nd Read: Psalm 46.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Today we use the Daily Order of Prayers from *Luther's Small Catechism*. Read and mediate on *Psalm 46* and:

"[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

(Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):

(Morning) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Afternoon/Evening) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.¹⁰

Consider/Reflect: "The almighty and Most High God controls nature, safeguards His chosen city against attacking foes, and stands over all nations at war. He is our sure fortress. In mercy, He makes Himself accessible and is, therefore, "God with us." We as individuals, and as the Church, experience many troubles in this life on account of the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature. Yet amid every crisis of body or soul, God is with us in His Son so that we may face every upheaval. [Pray]: O Lord, make us to know You as our refuge and strength, our very present help in every trouble. Amen."¹¹

9 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

10 Martin Luther. "Luther's Small Catechism." Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible*. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

11 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.