

FURTHER EXPLANATION OF BAPTISM

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Several short answers.

- God's Holy Handshake.
 - Martin Luther said, "Baptism is not merely water only, but water that is included in God's command and connected with God's word." It brings a promise and that gives a relationship...like a handshake when someone guaranties his word. But God wants to do more than just convince us he is sincere. He wants a relationship with us. In this sacred act, he passes to us all the blessings of the cross. This is why it is called, "God's Holy Handshake."
- It delivers and demonstrates an inward transformation through an outward expression.
- It is a sacred act that completely identifies the person with Christ and Christ with the person.
- It is ordinary water connected to the extraordinary promise of God for all to see
- It is God saying to the person, "Because of Jesus, you are my beloved child, with you, I am well pleased."
- It is visible sign of the promise of God that marks one as belonging to Him and a fellow member of His Church.
- Baptism is a sacrament...a sacred act commanded by Christ in which a visible element is connected to God's word. It is a promise from God that delivers the blessings of the cross...life in Christ, forgiveness, and salvation.

WHY IS BAPTISM SO IMPORTANT?

It would be enough to answer this question with the fact that Jesus commanded us. But why Jesus commanded it is perhaps a better response. Jesus wants us to know him as our Savior and Lord, our Leader and Friend. In short, Jesus desires a close relationship with all those who call on his name in faith. Jesus provided for the close relationship by paying the price of our sin. He died on the cross and experienced God's wrath against all sin and rebellion. It was a worthy and sufficient sacrifice that bought for us a life with God. Jesus rose from the dead to show the sacrifice complete and offer his life to all who would receive him. We receive him by trusting in what he had done for us that we could not do on our own. Baptism makes that promise real to us. Each day that we remember our baptism, we remember who we are in Christ. We remember the old nature is drowned and new has emerged. We remember that our sins are washed away so we can live for Jesus. We remember that our spiritual thirst is quenched. We remember that we are publicly identified as belonging to Jesus.

WHERE IS THIS IN THE BIBLE?

One text outlining the sacrament of baptism is found in the book of Acts. Here, the Apostle Peter follows up the very first Christian sermon with a call to baptism. In doing so he tells the wondering crowd what God will accomplish in their lives through simple water and His Word:

*“Repent and **be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the **forgiveness of your sins**. And you will receive the **gift of the Holy Spirit**. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom **the Lord our God will call**.”* – Acts 2:38-39 (NIV)

Here we see baptism connected to both the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, Peter is clear in saying that baptism is a gift that can and should be given to the whole family. Lastly, Peter says that baptism is not merely a human rite or a means by which humans show their commitment to God, but that God Himself draws, or “calls” us to baptism; indeed, baptism is something God does to us. Bottom line: in baptism God grants and confirms a saving relationship of faith and trust in the work of Jesus. Other texts are Gal 3:27; Col 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-11; Tit 3:5.

WHY DO WE BAPTIZE INFANTS?

There are some within Christianity who see baptism not as God’s action, an event where He is working and instilling faith, but rather as an act of human will – a response to God. Therefore, they see no need for those who cannot “choose” baptism to receive it.

However, the overwhelming majority of believers throughout the history of the church have baptized all ages – from infants to elderly.

Why offer baptism to all ages? First, because Scripture clearly teaches that God is doing His saving work in and through it. (1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-11)

Second, all ages need to be brought into saving, forgiving relationship with God. Everyone is not only infected with sin but also bears the punishment of sin (i.e. struggle, disease, death, etc.). (Romans 3:22-23, 6:23; Ps. 51:5) In baptism, God establishes a relationship with all people apart from our psychological capabilities – even though such capabilities are a key part of an adult’s response to God’s work.

Thirdly, Scripture commands it. Jesus’ told the disciples, and the church as a whole, to baptize “all nations.” (Matt. 28:19) Likewise, the Apostle Peter in the book of Acts, as seen above, clearly states that the promise of baptism is for the entire family to receive. (Acts 2:38-39) Later in the book of Acts, Luke tells us of the jailer of Philippi and his entire family being baptized – in which most likely infants were present. (Acts 16:33)

Fourth, all ages can have faith! While the very young undoubtedly express faith differently than the average adult, the fact remains that even they have the capacity to live in faith. Faith is not, after all, a certain intellectual mastery but a trust, relationship of dependence. Does an infant, in all of its inability of expression, still have a trust in and dependence upon its mother created by the parent’s action toward him/her? Yes. Why can’t they then have a faith and trust in God, which grows in expression and understanding just as their faith in mom and dad will do the same?

HOW DO WE EMPOWER FAMILIES WHEN THEY BRING THEIR CHILD TO BAPTISM?

We gather parents in small groups discuss topics around spiritual parenting. These discussions and teachings are also available online. Call the church office to find out how you can register for these experiences.

Session One: How to Give a Legacy of Faith

Session Two: How to Bless Your Child

Session Three: The Meaning and Power of Baptism

WE ARE A SACRAMENTAL CHURCH

This understanding of the sacraments is not just an idea but is reflected in nearly every aspect of our life as a community church. For example, you'll see it embedded into King of Kings community in the following ways:

- A regular, monthly celebration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- A regular and proud call to baptism for all ages
- Regular teaching on God's grace active within the sacraments
- Living the reality that God's presence in us makes us a sacrament to our families and communities:

We believe that God is passionately in love with us and pursues us in ways that make his love real to us. Sacrament. He wants to communicate all that He has done through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in our behalf.

In summary: Jesus for us. Jesus in us. Jesus through us.

We are part of the God's sacred action, part of His sacramental life. Jesus has been given FOR US, that He might live IN US, and work THROUGH US to bring His presence to the world.