

Reading: Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:29-41

Theme: Baptismal service.

This morning is a happy time with this baptismal service. For some of you it may be totally different to a baptismal service you may have been to in other churches. For many here we have seen such before and are here to support Martha and Jordan as they are going to be baptised in this little pool. From our reading in Matthew 28 we can see that when Jesus sent His disciples out to all nations, part of what He said they had to do was to be baptising them in, or into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This is what is going to be done here. We read of the early church in Acts 2 and saw that people believed and trusted in Jesus (*were converted, saved, born again*) and baptised even the same day. In the early church there was no such thing as an unbaptised believer. Baptism then, as now means that a person deliberately identifies them self as a Christian, as part of God's people and part of the Church. I want to briefly just mention 3 things:

1. Changed Ones.

In the passage from Matthew's gospel we read what is called The Great Commission - where Jesus told, commissioned His disciples to go out into the world and to make disciples i.e. followers of Jesus by telling of Him. As they did so people would be changed and want to follow Him and live in the ways that please Him. The natural condition or way of people is that basically we are all rebels and traitors against God. Naturally all of us are attracted to do the things that God says we are not to do and ignore and not do the things God says we should do. None of us can change that as we all have a rebellious nature deep-seated within us. We need to recognise this and to ask God to change us. We need God to help us understand this - that we can never reach His standard and will one day have to face Him and His sentence of judgement on our life. We may think that we are better than... Yet the standard God has is His own holy perfection and none of us come anywhere near to that standard.

As we realise that, God does not leave us feel utterly useless and helpless, because there is good news for all who feel like that. This good news tells us that God has done something for such ones as us. He has made a way for such hopeless ones as us to become changed ones and has done so at

no cost to us. The good news = the gospel of Jesus and is about what God has done for us to be right with Him. Jesus is central and essential to us being changed from being against God and His ways, to be changed and become for Him and His ways. When that happens all our record of rebellion against Him and breaking His holy awesome law are completely removed and all the rightness and perfection of the Lord Jesus is once and for all and forever credited to the account of our life. This means God accepts us and we can know His love and His life here on earth and even more than that, He has promised to take us home to be with Him one day.

These changed one are the ones who are to show this has happened by being baptised to show this. We use the picture of dying and being buried to our old way of life and being raised up the new life. This is part of what we feel baptism shows - it is an external picture of what has already happened in the life of those who are being baptised, which moves us onto our 2nd heading:

2. Pickled Onions.

I guess you were not expecting that heading! Hopefully it will become clear as I go on! Christians and churches throughout the ages have discussed the right way a person should be baptised - some say sprinkle with water, some say pour water over the head (effuse) and others say immerse (*posh way of saying dunk*). As a church we are baptistic in practice and would say it is by immersing, dunking. Many others around the world have the same practice in their churches, yet many others sprinkle or pour water. Here in the church many of us are convinced Baptists. I can appreciate the arguments, the viewpoint of the other views, but still feel this is the correct way.

Why is that? Greek word for baptise used in NT (βαπτίζω) is based on the word βαπτω which means to dip, dip in, immerse, to dip into dye - you wouldn't sprinkle the dye on a cloth, or pour it onto it, you would dip it into the dye. You have a nice cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit and you dip it, dunk it, baptize it into the drink - this is what the word means. One Greek poet and doctor called Nicander from 2nd century BC used both words in a recipe for making pickles (*the reason for my heading!*) Nicander said, to make a pickle, the vegetable must first dipped (βαπτω)

into boiling water. Then immersed (βαπτίζω) into a vinegar solution - used the two different Greek verbs. Both contain the idea of immersion into a liquid, but they produced different results - the first is temporary. The second is permanent. We are not immersing either Martha or Jordan into a vinegar solution, but warm good old Yorkshire water - water was always used in NT.

Another picture linked to baptism, as we learn from our reading in Matthew - those who are changed by trusting Jesus have been united in and with Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit, into the Father and while baptism makes them wet only for a temporary time, they are for ever united spiritually with and into God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit when they trusted Jesus as their Saviour and Friend. This is permanent and is to show more and more in their lives. That is why we will say they are baptised in, or into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as it is a living union with God the 3 in 1 (the Trinity).

That is something of the way that I and many in the church here feel is right. That said we understand the differences that other Christians and churches will have in this matter. See finally:

3. Big Ones or Little Ones.

Some churches baptise, christen, sprinkle babies or children and adults. Some of these churches would say that when a child or baby is baptised, they have the new life of God at that point. Yet Peter said in that passage in Acts that the people had to repent, be baptised and indicated that this promise also included children if they repented and were baptised, as well as many others who were not there at that time.

This is important to note. Jordan and Martha **are not becoming Christians** by being baptised, but are showing by their baptism that **they have already become Christians**, that they have owned their wrong before God and trusted the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and are changed ones – hopefully they will tell us something of that and you can ask them more about it after the service. We all need to trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour for we all have wrongs, shortcomings before God (*which the Bible calls sin and sins*) which need to be dealt with by all Jesus did in His life,

death, resurrection and ascension to heaven. The Bible is clear in its teaching that each one of us need to believe in the Lord Jesus to be forgiven and if we have opportunity to do so, to then be baptised. The clearest NT teaching on that order, as we read in Acts 2:38, “*Repent and be baptised*” and we see that in v41 with those who accepted Peter’s message, repented and were baptised.

In NT church an unbaptised believer was not known. Yes, Paul was not baptised for 3 days after he believed in Jesus, but when his physical blindness was removed, he was then baptised (at 9:19). I will ask 2 questions at this point: Are you a believer? By that I mean have you repented of your sin, turned away from it to God by trusting the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and have the new life that makes you a changed one? That is **the most important** question for you to answer between you and God. The next one follows on from it if that is the case: Are you baptised as Jesus commands? For you are to be baptised if you are a believer.

In NT times they had the apostles who had God-given insight, discernment and understanding, and so they could go ahead and baptise people straightaway, but as they wrote the NT, they taught that those who followed on from them were check people out who said they were Christians, by learning of their lives, talking to them so it was not to be a spur of the moment emotional thing on either part.

So, is it big ones or little ones? Baptism is not to be referred to as “*adult baptism*” as children can really and genuinely trust the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and show that in their lives. Baptism is for believers and should always be referred to as ***believers’ baptism***. This is what is going to happen in a short while – two who believe on the Lord Jesus as their Saviour will be baptised.

As we sing the next hymn, I will go and change and then after the hymn we will hear from both Martha and Jordan how this change happened in their own lives *and even why they want to be baptised*. After we have heard from them telling us they have trusted the Lord Jesus as their own Saviour and we will baptise them using the form of the words the Lord Jesus instructed us to use.