

Baptism: Words of Encouragement

Today is a special day for Canyon Bible Church. Today is a special day for Mary and Lynette. Mary and Lynette have requested to be baptized.

One of the biggest mistakes we make is to assume. We could assume that everyone knows why we are here today. We could assume that everyone understands the significance of baptism. And when you assume something, you can be very wrong.

Why do we practice baptism?

1. It is a Act of Obedience

Matthew 28:18-20 ***And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."***

In His last instructions to His disciples Jesus gave them one command with 4 parts: Go, make disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey. So, if someone becomes a disciple of Jesus, they are commanded to obey Jesus. And one command that we are to obey is to be baptized.

2. It identifies us With Christ

Romans 6:1-3 ***What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?***

Paul tells us that we are "in Christ". We are "baptized into Christ". Baptism does not save us. That would be "salvation by works". Paul is clear in Ephesians 2:8,9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

If a person tells you that you have to be baptized to be saved, you know he is wrong. If a denomination tells you that you have to be baptized to be saved, you know the denomination is wrong. That is heresy.

Baptism identifies us with Christ. The moment you that you confess your sin, put your faith in Christ, believe in the Cross and the Resurrection, and surrender your life to Jesus, the NT is clear -- from that moment we are in Christ and Christ is in us.

3. It is Evidence of a New Life

Romans 6:4-7 ***⁴Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷for he who has died is freed from sin.***

Baptism is a wonderful picture of what Christ does in us. “Buried with Him into death”. “Raised from the dead... so that we might walk in newness of life”.

Paul’s conclusion – Not only are we in Christ- Christ is in us.... “So that we would no longer be slaves to sin”.

Baptism should not be taken lightly. It is a public declaration to friends, family and the Church that one belongs to Jesus and intends fully to live for Jesus. With that in mind, I would like to look briefly at 3 men who stood at the crossroads of eternity. 3 men who were faced with a decision that would not only affect their lives here on earth, but also their future for all eternity.

This morning, I want to give words of encourage to Mary and Lynette. To do that, let’s look at a passage in Luke 9:

Luke 9:51-56 ***When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; ⁵²and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. ⁵³But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” ⁵⁵But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; ⁵⁶for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”] And they went on to another village.***

This is the set up for the 3 men that I want to take a look at. As Jesus sets his GPS coordinates for Jerusalem, he approaches a Samaritan village. Being a Jew headed in the direction of Jerusalem, they reject Him. They do not welcome him into their town. They do not want to hear His message. More than likely Jesus was accompanied by the 12 and a band of other faithful followers. A negative cloud hung over the group as they moved on. Jesus had just been rejected.

1. 1st Encounter

Luke 9:57,58 ***⁵⁷As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, “I will follow You wherever You go.” ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”***

I think that this person may have witnessed the rejection by the Samaritan village. Why else would Luke tell the story this way? The band of disciples was so happy to be with Jesus. They saw miracles. They heard words of life. To show that he was not like the Samaritans, one man steps up and proclaims absolute fidelity to Jesus. "I will follow you wherever you go". That leaves no doubt. It allows no exceptions. It is a statement without reservation.

I remember another man who once boasted and said, "I will never deny you". It is so easy to get caught up in emotions and make promises that we are ready to fulfill.

Jesus tested His resolve. OK. You want to follow me. Here are the conditions. ***"The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."***

I have to add an observation. If Jesus did not have a bed or a pillow, that means He was completely dependent on the generosity of others. Judas carried the money bag. But did he have enough cash to finance 13 rooms in the local hotel every night? One place that He often stayed was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

They knew He was special. But they could not imagine that He had power to raise the dead. And He did – Lazarus. Were they present at the Ascension? Were they numbered with the 120 gathered in the Upper Room? Can you imagine their thoughts as they reflected on the life of Jesus? They would look inside their home and say, "The King of Glory was here" "The King of Glory sat right there". Maybe they opened their home and gave tours. That's what someone would do today.

Jesus made clear to the first man - I can not guarantee earthly comfort. I do not promise earthly possessions. I do not call you to a life of ease. But I do promise benefits that are out of this world.

Life can be hard. On several occasions, Joyce & I were going through dark days. Circumstances were hard. I have said to her several times, "How do people do this without Jesus?"

A woman in California was interviewed for the news last night. Her parents' home had burned to the ground in the fires. Everything was gone. With her voice cracking and tears streaming down her face, she said, "There is nothing left. Not even a photograph". I am convinced that a believer will handle that situation better than a non-believer. Our hope is in Jesus. We look forward to heaven. "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face,. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace".

2. 2nd Encounter

Jesus has a second interaction. This time He initiates the conversation....

Luke 9:59-60 ⁵⁹ ***And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."*** ⁶⁰ ***But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."***

I think the man's response indicates 2 possibilities. The possibility that I have heard the most is – delay. I will follow you, but not yet. There are things that I have to do. My father is still alive. I have an obligation there. When He is gone, call me. I will probably be ready at a later date.

I think there is a second possibility. The second man just heard Jesus reprove the first guy. If you follow me, it might be tough. I have no earthly possessions.

If the second man waits for his father to die, what happens? He gets the inheritance. OK Jesus, if you can't fund this thing, I will take care of it myself. If following You is hard, I'll have enough cash to soften the blow. I will follow you. But I will follow you on my terms. I will follow you my way".

Do the words of Jesus seem harsh? Jesus knew his heart and knew what he needed to hear. "Stop worrying about things on earth. There are people with no spiritual perception who can take care of earthly matters. If you truly have spiritual perception – if you understand who I am and what I require – Go and preach".

When Jesus called the 12, we know that Matthew left his government job. Peter, James, and John - each one - left the family business. They left their boats, their nets, and their fathers. Luke does not provide details of their responses. But, I think Luke's silence is a pretty good indication that each of these first 2 men each went his own way.

3. 3rd Encounter

Luke 9: ⁶¹ ***Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."*** ⁶² ***But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."***

The third individual hears Jesus lay it straight and thinks, "Wow. That was pretty tough. He can't go back to his father. Maybe if I include the whole family, and all my friends, and a few relatives, maybe then, Jesus will understand". ***Permit me to say good-bye to those at home***

Jesus so far has said, "If you want to follow me, there may be tough at times. You may not experience comfort and ease. Don't focus on things of this earth". And to the third, (I think) He communicates, "Once your focus is on heaven – once your focus is on the Kingdom of God, there is no looking back".

Lot's wife looked back. I wonder why. Did she want to see the tragedy? What do people do as they drive by a car accident? The fire and brimstone rained down from heaven. Maybe the sound drew her attention. Lot's wife looked back. Was it curiosity to view a tragedy?

Or did she look back at the life she was leaving? Had she become accustomed to life in Sodom? Maybe, rather than being repulsed by the evil of the city, she had become immune to evil.

Jesus – says to the believer, "Don't look back".

My father was a farmer. I would watch him plow. He would sit in the tractor's seat and line up the gas cap at the end of the hood with a tree in the distance. Why? It gave him direction. It kept him going straight.

I have now taught 4 teenagers to drive – my own 3 children and a friend of the family. One of the hardest things to teach a new driver is to look for traffic to the left before changing lanes. Why? What does the inexperienced driver do when he turns his head to the left? When the new driver looks over his shoulder to see the “dead spot” by the rear left fender, He moves the steering wheel to the left.

If a farmer wants to plough a straight furlough, he keeps his eyes focused on a mark in front of him. A teen has to look back quickly to make sure the lane is clear. But, he has to know that there is danger in looking back.

Jesus said, ***“No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”***

Friends from Spain visited us 2 weeks ago. Another couple visited us Wed and Thursday. As we talked on the patio, I asked, “What about this one? Is he still following the Lord?” At times, I was so pleased. Ron would reply, “Yes. He is still following the Lord – Serving the Lord – Helping in the local ministry of his church”.

But I was also saddened. I would ask, "What about that one?" And the response would come, "No. He is no longer part of the church. He avoids the believers in his town."

It was even harder to hear about Spanish teens. They had been raised in the local church of a small town. Their parents paid a terrible price in the Spain of yesterday for their testimony. Today, there is freedom. As Ron talked, he told of church after church, where the teens turn 18 years old. And when they do, they leave the Church – they abandon the Faith. They no longer live for the Lord.

How can you hear the message of grace and walk away? How can you know the price that Jesus paid to save you, and walk away? How can you hear the promises of heaven and the certainty of Hell, and walk away?

My heart grieves for those who have walked away from Jesus. My heart rejoices for those who heard the Gospel, responded, and continue to walk faithfully in the foot steps of Jesus.

The challenge to each person today is, "Have you made the life-changing decision to follow Jesus?" Have you made the one decision that will alter eternity? If not, today would be a great day to do it. Today we have an example of those who want to publically declare their faith in Jesus. They want to publically declare their love for Jesus.