

Rom. 6:1-11; I John 5:6-12; The Blood and the Water I. Death at the Blood and Water II. Life at the Blood and Water

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what is baptism about? What is the focus and importance of this event as we witness it within the context of the Christian community. As we have just seen with little Paxton and Rae Lee, as these little ones are brought forward and water is sprinkled on them- what should we be thinking of? As we will find out today- the point of baptism is not so much the water that was sprinkled on these children- the focus is not really on these little ones either- but rather the focus of baptism is same focus as every sermon. If gospel preaching is about Jesus Christ and Him crucified, then it stands to reason that the sacraments have the same content. So as we look at baptism this morning, we are brought back to sufficiency of Jesus Christ! Children, have you every been asked to read a book for class and then write a review of that book? One of the questions that most teachers will ask is this- what was this book about? What was the main idea of this chapter? It takes discernment doesn't it- to capture the main idea and to summarize the author's intent. I'm sure some teachers get a good laugh when they read the supposed main ideas submitted by some students- as they ask themselves- where did they come up with this? Well, today we come to baptism and we ask ourselves- what is the main idea behind baptism? In order to keep us on the right track, we have the witness and testimony of God that testifies to us. What should we see- what does God want us to learn as we see the water and hear the promises of God? So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals His own work in the sign of baptism. But before we begin our first point, we have to dig into this concept of water and blood in I John 5. We have a 3-fold witness given to us- three that testify to the truth about salvation as 5:7 says- the water, blood and the Spirit. So the Holy Spirit teaches us the truth- and we have the water and the blood. Now what is this water and blood that testify concerning the truth of the gospel. Well, the water and the blood are the two, key elements that are present in the life of Jesus Christ. As we will see, water and blood speak of both life and death- a life and death that are pictured in baptism. So what is this water and blood that are present in Jesus' life. Well, the water and blood are seen in the birth and death of Jesus. The birthing process is one that produces both water and blood- by water and blood a baby is born. A pregnant mother has her water break- and the baby comes forth covered in blood.

Mary's water broke when she gave birth to Jesus. Think also of Jesus' baptism- His baptism was a water baptism in the Jordan by the hand of John. And think of Jesus' death- as He was hung on a tree- blood flowed from His hands and feet as the nails pierced his flesh. Think of Jesus on the cross- when His side was pierced, water and blood flowed forth from his side. So when John speaks of the one who came by water and blood- He is referring to the whole ministry of Jesus Christ. Christ came by water and blood- born by water and blood. He was baptized into the water and anointed by the Spirit- and as He died, we see the water and blood again. So the water and the blood testify to the whole life and specifically the public ministry of Jesus Christ! He not only began but completed His work. Being completely sufficient in all aspects- to purchase our salvation and cleanse us from all our sins. So the complete ministry of Jesus- from baptism to crucifixion- testify to the sufficiency of Jesus- the same sufficiency that is proclaimed at baptism this morning. So the point of baptism is this- Jesus came by the water and blood to fully purchase our salvation. A salvation that we now share in by faith- a salvation pictured and promised at baptism. As humans, we need water to survive- but if we remain under water too long, we perish. So here at baptism we find both death and life!

I. Death at the Blood and Water

In our first point, we find that death is present at the water and blood. Both the death of Jesus- and our death- are in view here. As we read from Rom. 6:3, those who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death. So when we see baptism- we should be thinking of death! There is death in the water and in the blood! But whose death? When we take a step back, we can see that both water and blood are pictures of death in the OT. We need only think of the flood and the Red Sea- water turned into an agent of death for those who rebelled and rejected the good news. Whoever refused the God appointed mediator- the preacher of righteousness and the prophet of God's choosing- found death in the water. If you ignored the preaching of Noah- if you hardened your heart against the words of Moses- then the baptism of water becomes you instrument of death. So there is death in the water. But there is also death evident in the blood. We need only think of the animal sacrifices in the OT- how the shedding of blood was necessary for the forgiveness of sins.

Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness. A river of blood ran from the alter. Think of the Passover Lamb- without blood to cover you and your household the angel of death- the destroying angel would bring death to your household as well. And when we put these pictures in the context of Jesus Christ- we still find that there is death in the water and the blood! Baptism speaks of death- we are united to Christ in a baptism of death as Rom. 6 put it- baptized into His death. There is a union that takes place by faith- His death is reckoned our death! Just as Jesus had to be born and die on the cross for us- taking our place in His perfect life and in His substitutionary death- we find that in baptism we are put to death. Being baptized into Christ now means that our sins are crucified with Christ- the old man has been put to death with Christ and these sins are now dead- in the grave! We have died to sin- as baptism is a sign of our participation in the death of Jesus Christ! To put this another way, when we see baptism, we should see ourselves following Jesus into the water. There in the water, our old man is drowned- buried- put to death- dies with Christ! We are forgiven because someone died for us- but we must not forget that something died in us as well! Consider yourselves dead to sin- you have died to the old man- baptized into the death of Christ! Sin is no longer your master- the old nature is no longer in control of your life- you have died with Christ! Baptism says- you are not a child of the world- you died to that old way! So there is judgement and death evident in baptism- either you stand condemned in your sins- or Jesus was condemned for you sins in your place. Baptism reminds us- promises us- Jesus died so that you might be forgiven- His death was your death- your sins have died in Him!

II. Life at the Blood and Water

But there is also life to be found here- there is new life to be found in the water and the blood. Or as we read in Rom. 6, if we have been buried with Him by baptism into death, being united with Him in a death like His, we are also- or we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection. Continuing the picture of baptism- we not only follow Jesus into the water to die, we follow Jesus up out of the water as well! We come out of the water clean, alive and renewed! We have received as Titus 3:5 puts it, a washing! God saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit! We call this regeneration and sanctification- washed and now made

clean- raised with Christ to a new, holy life! In the OT you can find ritual washing- water sprinkled on objects to signify that they have been made clean. So now this water of baptism has become to us a sign- a reminder that we have been washed in the blood and anointed with the Spirit- made clean and set apart for holy work. Also in the OT, the Israelites were forbidden from eating meat with blood in it- because life was in the blood. Well, being united to Christ means that we now share in His life- having been united to His body- His body becoming our food and His blood becoming our drink as we confess during the Lord's Supper. In this way, we have the water of life and the blood of the covenant given to us to give us life! So there is a cleansing, but also a nourishing aspect present in the picture of baptism. As I said before, regeneration and sanctification. Raised with Christ to be anointed for holy service. So as Jesus came by water and blood- baptized and anointed by the Spirit. We too have new life signified by the water of baptism and the blood of the covenant- sharing the anointing with Christ to be prophets, priests and kings. Coming out of the water is as a resurrection of sorts- as we are joined to Christ and raised with Him to a new life. As LD 26 puts it, to be washed with Christ's blood and Spirit means that we are forgiven, renewed and sanctified members of Christ- raised to live a holy life in Him!

To conclude, baptism is a reminder of death and life! It reminds us of Christ's birth, death and resurrection which purchased our salvation according to the gospel promise. Baptism is a promise and picture of our death and life as well- joined to Christ in His death our old man dies. Baptism speaks of our union- we are united to Christ and are now one with His people. As little Paxton and Rae are now marked- identified as one of God's children- so all those who are baptized into the name of God enjoy this sign of union. A union that reminds us we are joined to Christ in death and resurrection, we come to life as a new man. For those who have been baptized, we are called to embrace the promise behind the sign- that Jesus died for us so that our sins might be forgiven, and He was raised for us so that we might come alive to a new life! Those who are joined to Christ by faith enjoy these blessings! Baptism reminds us that our old man died with Christ- and that we now live a new life in Him! Jesus Christ reveals His own work in the sign of baptism. So may we rejoice in the new life we now have through Christ!