

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS 2021

We celebrate Jesus' Baptism today. What a GREAT DAY! It brings back memories for me of when our oldest, Joshua was born. We had some interesting discussions, where Josh's mom was fine with baptizing a baby, but I had some wondering whether he should be at the so-called, "age of consent." The interesting thing was that his mom had grown up in a church where you had to give a testimony when you got baptized, which wasn't something she wanted to do. But, by the time she joined a main-line church and got baptized, she was already a teenager. You might say she was at the age of consent.

I was baptized as a baby in Germany in a very private baptism attended by mother, father, older brother, me of course, and the minister. Then, when I got to be a young adult, I had a reawakening and got "re-baptized". So here I was acting more un-Lutheran than my new Lutheran wife. WHAT TO DO? BAPTIZE OR WAIT?

It was then that I remembered that in Mathew's Gospel, John the Baptist had some doubts and questions about baptism, too. His was also a moral question, whether he was **spiritually pure enough** to baptize Jesus. What was resolved was that John baptizes those who have repented and received forgiveness of their past debts—A BAPTISM OF REPENTENCE. I guess you could say that John's baptism is more about the past, while Jesus' baptism is more about the fellowship of moral consent that you are now converted into. So, the Baptism into Jesus is more about moving ahead with your faith in hand to power you!

So, I consented to have Joshua baptized and now have made some other realizations that make things have more sense to me. And it's, at least in part, John the Baptist's hesitation that has helped clarify things for me. John's job was to do the part of the baptism that uses NORMAL HUMAN HANDS. John was right in thinking and saying that he just WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH. But then, that's true of any Baptizer.

I sure know that there is nothing extra-ordinary about my hands when I PERFORM a Baptism. John's was a Baptism of Repentance for the FORGIVENESS OF

SINS. When I baptize people, it's me and my sinful hands asking a child or adult and their parents and/or their sponsors if they support this Baptism. We are all repenting in the hope that God looks, not at our sins, our shortcomings, but that God looks at Jesus the Christ who gave himself up to suffer and die on the Cross so that we could all be GOOD ENOUGH. But, GOOD ENOUGH FOR WHAT?

As I see it, there are 2 answers, depending on how we look at being BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST. The answer is all IN THE TRANSLATION. As our Genesis passage tells us, God said, "Let there be light! So there was light. God saw the light was good. So God separated the light from the darkness." So, let's separate light from darkness.

The first part of our Psalm for the day talks about God's POWER, and let's be honest, it's God's DESTRUCTIVE POWER. Mighty Cedar trees are BROKEN. FIRES RAVAGE. Oak trees are UPRROOTED. Then comes that almost unfathomable passage that comes next, that says that God is enthroned over all this destructive force.

I had to ask myself, in what ways is God ENTHRONED OVER DESTRUCTION? We are told that God gives STRENGTH TO HIS PEOPLE, so that they MAY LEAD HIS PEOPLE WITH PEACE. As you and I have been finding out most of the last year is that the planet that God created has been bombarded with fires, floods from tropical storms, changes in our environment, and LAST BUT DEFINITELY NOT LEAST, PANDEMICS!

But, the jury is still out in how we are doing. Are we trying to get baptized by human, sinful hands, or the hands of the one in whose name we baptize? And BY WHAT SPIRIT DO WE BAPTIZE? There were some disciples who thought and still think today that SPEAKING FOR THE SPIRIT OF GOD was intended to prove how certain Christians were able to speak in a way that only the SELLECT FEW COULD UNDERSTAND. Those SPECIAL ONES would be happy to translate for you FOR A COST—THE COST BEING TO TREAT THEM WITH UNDYING LOYALTY.

I prefer the BABEL TRANSLATION METHOD. The Language Course, Babel, promises to teach us basic phrases that allows us to SPEAK IN WAYS THAT

EVERYONE CAN UNDERSTAND. Our translation of speaking the language of the Holy Spirit is that they began to SPEAK IN WORDS THAT EVERYONE COULD UNDERSTAND IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE. The language that everyone could truly understand is not the words of DESTRUCTION, be it NATURAL DISASTERS, OR WARS, OR CLIMATE CHANGE, OR PANDEMICS. The LANGUAGE OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH WHOM WE ARE BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST IS LANGUAGE OF **LIGHT & LOVE.**

You and I are **NOT** BAPTIZED INTO THE POWERS OF DESTRUCTION AND BLAME. Those are the powers that we are supposed to REPENT OF. You and I are BAPTIZED INTO THE GOD THAT SAYS TO US, **“YOU ARE MY CHILD, WHOM I LOVE. I AM PLEASED WITH YOU!”**

Recently, a group of leaders from all over the world were asked what are the greatest fears and challenges that face our world in the days ahead. One might think that the Corona Virus would be at the top of the list. Instead, their greatest concern was that our country, the one that most people and other countries look to for answers, was so driven by forces that divide us, that we would not be able to allow our disagreements to be resolved, so that we could once again be driven to find common ground and learn to love and forgive each other as a well functioning family would.

Baptism **IS NOT** a mere sprinkling of a few drops of water on an unsuspecting victim of our unquestioning habits. Baptism **IS** finding our ONENESS WITH PEOPLE—THE KIND THAT BAPTIZES US INTO LOVE FOR EACH OTHER AND OUR LOVING GOD! As for me, my unremarkable hands will continue to sprinkle the remarkable love of God on anyone who is brought to the font! Then, together, we can be part of the FAMILY who **HEAL WITH GOD’S LOVE, THE PEOPLE AND THINGS THAT ARE BROKEN!**

And all of God’s BAPTIZED WITH LOVE CHILDREN SAID...**AMEN!**