

Why Sacred Mysteries: The Sacraments and Why We Practice Them *Week Three Handout*

IV. Lutheran understanding of Baptism

The Water and the Word: Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16, Titus 3:5-8, Romans 6:1-4, 1 Peter 3:18-22, Acts 16:30-33, Acts 2:37-39, Acts 8:12, Acts 8:35-38, Acts 2:41, 1 Cor. 12:12-13, Eph. 4:4-5, 1 Cor. 10:1-5, Exodus 30:18-21

Meaning of Baptize in Greek: to immerse or to dip

In the 1991 edition of Luther's Small Catechism, a sacrament is defined as an act or rite:

1. Instituted by God;
2. In which God Himself has joined His Word of promise to the visible element;
3. By which He offers, gives and seals the forgiveness of sin earned by Christ.

In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, sacraments are defined as:

If we define the sacraments as rites, which have the command of God and to which the promise of grace has been added, it is easy to determine what the sacraments are, properly speaking. For humanly instituted rites are not sacraments, properly speaking, because human beings do not have the authority to promise grace. Therefore signs instituted without the command of God are not sure signs of grace, even though they perhaps serve to teach or admonish the common folk (Article XIII, pg. 184)

Large Catechism pg. 423. 1: "Every Christian also ought to have a least in ordinary, brief instruction about the Sacraments, because without them he cannot be a Christian".

Baptism is God's work and is instituted by God. (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16)

Baptism is an outward thing; external to us, yet it is of benefit (pg. 424, 8)

Baptism is a simple "work"; it is undervalued because it isn't flashy.

In the water of Baptism, God says, "I am here, and I have forgiven you".

Faith alone saves, outward things do nothing, faith in God and trusting in Him and in His Word

Baptism provides a concrete reality that we are washed, cleansed, and purified by God

Romans 6: We die with Christ so that we may be raised with him

Spirit and Body: we are not just spiritual creatures but physical ones as well; baptism brings that reality home in a concrete sense.

Remember your Baptism daily, in the "third sacrament" of confession and absolution (430, 74)--

Repentance, therefore, is nothing other than a return and approach to Baptism. If we think of Baptism as something that happened only once long ago, we will despair when we fall again into sin. "For this reason let everyone value his Baptism as a daily dress in which he is to walk constantly" (431, 84). Baptism will remain as long as we carry the old man about our neck. (the albatross)

Is Baptism necessary?

Is there a different baptism in/by/with the Holy Spirit?

Infant Baptism

Arguments against it:

1. Baptism is a sign that we have come to faith in God, or is something we decide to do after coming to faith in God. Infants are not capable of believing and therefore, should not be baptized..
2. Denial of the doctrine of original sin: children are innocent.
3. Baptism is purely an ordinance; it is not connected to salvation at all. Extreme views reject baptism as an outmoded Jewish purification rite.

Luther's arguments for it:

1. God today sanctifies people who were baptized as infants; if God did not accept the baptism of infants, he would not have given his Holy Spirit and gifts to them.
2. "Baptism is valid, even though faith is lacking. For my faith does not make Baptism, but receives it. Now, Baptism does not become invalid even though it is wrongly received or used. As stated above, it is not bound to our faith, but to the Word." (analogy to receiving the Supper unworthily).
"Abuse does not destroy the essence, but confirms it. For gold is not the less gold even though a harlot wears it in sin and shame. True faith is not necessary for true Baptism, because it is not based on faith but on the Word.
3. Romans 6:1-4 and John 3: We must be born again, by putting to death the old Adam and rising anew with Christ. "Those without Christ become worse daily, when we have come into Christ's kingdom, these things must daily decrease." (430, 70) "A young child has no special vice. but when it grows up, it becomes unchaste and impure. When it reaches maturity, real vices begin to triumph. The longer the child lives, the more vices."
4. Faith is fundamentally trust, which can exist independent of belief, reason, or articulation. James 2:19: "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder". Just as an infant can trust in his mother or father, they can also trust God.
5. Baptism is not just a recognition of faith, it is a way that we receive the Holy Spirit who creates faith in us.

McCain, Paul. 2006. *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*. Concordia Publishing House.