

Christian Baptism

Matthew 19:3 - Some Pharisees came to Him to test Him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

There was a big debate in that day

There were two Jewish theologians

The Bible doesn't record this, but Jewish historians do

Two Jewish theologians: Hillel and Shammai

And they represent the two major views of this in ancient times

Shammai was more conservative theologically

And Hillel was more liberal theologically

Not Republican / Democrat

But theologically liberal and conservative

A common phrase of the day was that Shammai binds

While Hillel loosens

When it came to marriage and divorce:

Shammai said that you could divorce your spouse only for serious, serious transgressions

Specifically adultery

Hillel disagreed - Hillel said a man could "divorce his wife for any and every reason."

Specifically - anything that was offensive to the husband

Some examples:

She burned breakfast

She gained weight

She's just not as pretty as the new girl at work

Anything that was offensive to the husband

Jesus speaks to it:

Matthew 19:8-9 - Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone

who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

What's Jesus saying?

How do we interpret that?

Because sometimes today, the Bible is hard to understand

What was happening in that day?

Were there cultural references that we don't easily understand?

We're reading a written account

Were there nuances or facial expressions or body language that Matthew didn't record?

Has anybody ever misunderstood the intent of your email

OK

So with those obstacles in mind

Who would have understood this the best of anyone?

The people standing there, right?

Specifically, the 12 disciples who knew Jesus best

So when Jesus taught that

What did they think?

Matthew 19:10 - The disciples said to Him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”

And Jesus doesn't disagree

Jesus doesn't chase them down and say 'you've misunderstood'

Or 'maybe I came across too strong'

Matthew 19:11 - Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.

So if you read Jesus' teaching on marriage in Matthew 19

About the permanence of marriage

And you don't have some part of you saying
If that's right... I'm not sure we shouldn't all just stay single
If you don't sense some of that
You may not be fully absorbing the level of permanence that Jesus is teaching

In the same way
Paul, through the first 5 chapters of the book of Romans
Teaches and challenges and exhorts us
To lean into the grace of God
Bought on the cross by Jesus His Son

And chapter 6 then begins
As an outflowing of the conversation of the first 5 chapters

This way:

Romans 6:1 - What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

If Jesus' grace increases to match our sin
Should we just go crazy and sin all the more

Paul is providing a Biblical answer to a reasonable question

If you understand Romans 1-5 correctly, this question makes sense

If this question doesn't make sense, we have not understood Romans 1-5 correctly

Our view of God's grace is often too small

Philip Yancey story

"Women much like this prostitute fled toward Jesus, not away from him. The worse a person felt about herself, the more likely she saw Jesus as a refuge. Has the church lost that gift?"— Philip Yancey, What's So Amazing About Grace?

Romans 6:1 - What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

No – Paul says

But I can see how you would be confused by that

God's grace... is truly amazing

Read Romans 6:1-2a

So Paul is saying that grace is available

But more & more sinning is not the answer

Jesus didn't come to get rid of sin & truth

Look at what He says in Matthew 5

Matthew 5:17-18 - Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. I tell you the truth, until Heaven and Earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved.

Grace is available

Amazing grace is available

But more & more sinning is not the answer

"By no means" – he writes

Why not?

Read Romans 6:3

OK – so our baptism

For those who have chosen to be baptized

We have been immersed into the death of Jesus

What does that mean?

Read Romans 6:4

I want you to notice two key words

"Through baptism"

Some translations say "By baptism"

It's the Greek word "dia" (διά)

It literally means “through” or “across”

In fact, it paints the picture of things are this way on one side of the stream

And then because you’ve crossed over to the other side

Things are now this way

In the intertestamental Jewish traditions

Baptisms would happen outdoors

They didn’t have church buildings with heated baptisteries

Baptisms would happen outdoors

And they often would do them gender specific

So a bunch of men would go out

Or a group of ladies

And the candidate for baptism would walk out into the stream in his or her street clothes

They would completely undress

This is why it was only men or women

They would completely undress

Representing shedding the old way of life

I read one account of them letting their old clothes float away downstream

But then they would dip themselves down into the water

John the Baptist was the first person in recorded history to baptize others

They would dip themselves down into the water

And then they would be given a new white robe to put on

With that picture in mind

Let’s read that verse again

Read Romans 6:4-5

Just as Jesus was lowered down into the grave

Dead

And then He was raised by the power of God to new life

In baptism, you see the picture of a person dying to themselves

Lowered down into the water

And then raised by the power of God to new life in Christ

Galatians 3:27 – “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Immersed into this God way of life – “I’m in!”

“Jesus is Lord”

This is one of the key pictures of baptism

Identifying with Christ’s death

And identifying with His resurrection

Through this act of baptism

Because many of you are on the verge of committing your lives to Christ

And many others have recently chosen to do so

I want to take some time this morning to discuss this practice of baptism

And what God’s intent was when He commanded it

Explain the History of Baptism

Pre-John the Baptist...

John the Baptist (first to baptize others – aligning with him & his message)...

Jesus...

John 3:22-23a – “After this, Jesus and His disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where He spent some time with them, and baptized. Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water.”

To be baptized in Jesus’ name is to be immersed into His way of life

Then Jesus – right before He ascended into Heaven – included baptism as part of His great commission:

Matthew 28:18-20 – “Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

So Peter’s not going to baptize them in his name

I certainly don’t baptize people in my name

It always and forever points to God

“Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”

The church, over the years, has done a poor job, in my opinion

Of making teachings about baptism clear

So today – I want to emphasize

What I think Scripture teaches is the “intent of baptism”

What was baptism intended to be?

First and foremost, it was designed to be a:

A Pledge to God

1 Peter 3 is discussing Noah’s ark and the flood that took place as an analogy

1 Peter 3:20b-21 - In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ

Pledge...

Wedding analogy / graduation analogy

This is the primary reason we don’t perform infant baptisms

If you were baptized as an infant

I would like to challenge you to make that pledge yourself

Not the removal...

~~Holy Water~~

Over the years, we've baptized many people in the baptistery in this building

And we've baptized many people in the Aenon creek on the edge of our property

You may not realize it, but you could still be baptized in the creek if you prefer

If you choose to be baptized in the creek

You will be *physically* dirtier when you come out than you were when you went in

"It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ"...

Ceremonies are useless if not tied to a larger commitment

A few weeks ago, our preschool

The Academy at WellSpring

Had their annual preschool graduation

If one of the parents had a bunch a money sittin' around

And paid off Williamson County Schools to let that graduation count at Summit High School also

It wouldn't mean anything

A ceremony – if its just a ceremony – doesn't mean anything

Baptism isn't just a ceremony

It's a pledge to God

Baptism is also for:

The forgiveness of sins

A few minutes ago, we looked at the great commission

Ten days later

Peter preached the Gospel to the crowd gathered in Jerusalem

The people were cut to the heart and asked

And asked, "What shall we do?"

Certainly reminded of Jesus' command 10 days earlier

Peter gives baptism a key emphasis

Acts 2:38 - Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

On that day, thousands of people expressed their faith in God

By having another believer immerse them in water

And raise them up again

For the forgiveness of sins

And the gift of the Holy Spirit

We see this pattern again and again in Scripture

In Acts 22 – we see Paul recounting his conversion

Acts 22:16 –And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

Baptism is a pledge to God

It’s intended for the forgiveness of sins

And it’s a:

Point of Unity in the Church

Ephesians 4:2-3 - Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

The first verses in Ephesians 4 are all about unity

Keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace

That’s really hard to do

Does this passage give us any clues about how to do that?

It does:

Ephesians 4:4-6 - There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Baptism is designed to bring the church together

Wedding Exhortation

Relate to Baptism

It has become a theological debate or a point of division

Not God's intent

WellSpring – Simple Christianity (not easy – but simple)

Acts 2:41 – “Those who accepted his message were baptized...”