**“United with Jesus”**

Psalm 29

Isaiah 42:1-9

Romans 6:1-11

Matthew 3:13-17

Baptism of Our Lord

From Romans 6: “if we have been united with Jesus in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

In 1988, the shoe company (Nike) launched what it described as “a tough, take no prisoners ad campaign” fighting against its soft-peddling competitor Reebok called “Just Do It”. It aimed not at some select few in the athletics community, but every man, woman, and child for everyday wear on every surface this world has (so of every ethnicity and background / every “walk” of life, not just “run”). It certainly utilized professional athletes who’d don themselves for their **events** so clothed upon their feet, but it was to encourage everyone to dress so as a lifestyle … to step out from the fray while at home or at work and school, to put on and **keep on** from morning until crawling into bed at night.

For the brand, the campaign increased their market share almost 3-fold within the next 10 years, with revenue increasing 10-fold. The slogan became an icon of not-only how the world thought about shoes but how we thought about many things. “Just Do It” made the “**It**”-of-that **many things**, and made **submitting to instructions** fashionable after the push to “that not being” in the ‘60s. Of all things, “conformity” in one major (and acceptable) way got promoted and **accepted**. **We decided (as a world-wide society)** that doing “a unifying and seemingly positive thing” as one big “**whole**” was OK and even good and healthy. We accepted direction and guidance and thought of ourselves as a **unified entity on a unified quest**, all dressed (in one way) similar and intelligently, **well-prepared** for anything days could send our direction.

**Text**

“**Baptism Saving**” would be a nice (and accurate, and **much better**) **“IT”** to get the people of the world to “**Just Do**”. Romans 6 cites a number of **benefits** that outshine (every one of them) the cultural ones maybe from wearing the right shoes. “Do **you not know that**” Paul begins the laundry list … and he’s an outstanding promoter in this (but billboards and TV commercials certainly would help advance the offer). A “death” and “burial” with Christ “**in order that**”, for instance, “sin dies” with its effect and an even earthly “walk in newness of life” followed by a “resurrection like” Jesus’, all presents a wonderful overview of enjoyment the facts of this **SAVING THING** gives. The copy from Paul’s advertisements promise **life** and even **lifestyle** results, yet nothing just temporal and temporary, but **life-altering change now and forever** trumping (by infinite amounts) any only **slight enhancements** of lacing up with Nike foot-ware.

Martin Luther put the distinction of the offer **this way**: “Imagine there was a doctor somewhere who understood the art of **saving people from death** or, even though they died, could **restore them quickly to life so that they could afterward live forever**. Oh, **how the world would** pour in money like snow and rain. No one could find access to him because of the **throng of the rich**!” And I’ll let him finish that thought in a bit … but, first, look at the benefits of what’s being discussed:

1. Being given the opportunity to **die to the worst of ourselves** is an **offer that starts every other really-good offer**. Jesus pulled repentant sinners onto Himself to carry us with Him **through a cross** **…** but first **to it**. Crucified was not only Him but us accepting the offer of being united to Him. Not that we’d have to have felt the nails and torture, but we’re granted (even expected) to hang our lousiest upon where and how He died so that those things making up our worst could die where He did. Once that happens, when He said the Words “It is finished” He meant the penalty of every dastardly deed and thought and neglect that He adopted from our putting it on Him. If **dying** to even any portion of ourselves (even the worst) doesn’t sound appealing so far, then we’ve not heard enough about the worst portion of ourselves to care about getting it killed off. God says that, by our own natural self, we’re **disconnected with Him**, “**dead in trespasses**” as He calls it (not just sick), “children of wrath” in general (of all things). Romans (earlier than our text in chapter 6) says that “no one is righteous” (at least, not enough in any expectation of God sorts of ways), and it goes on to say **despicable things about our bad portions which are (as it turns out) more bad and more prevalent when measured to what God expects than maybe we’d ever have thought**. **Dying-to-that** linked to a beneficial result from that kind of death is a wonderful thing … necessary for anything really-good after that death occurs. The fact is: such a death to what’s corrupt in us yields a new opportunity for a life beyond what we could have ever imagined.
2. “Newness of life” is a **lifestyle** that’s gift not acquirable in any way other than by being connected to God in Christ Jesus. When one thinks of life connected to God, one can miss appreciating a large chunk of it if they only consider it a **future** blessing and **more present** **obligation** rather than **everyday** **pleasure**. “Newness of life” makes decisions differently, actually thinks differently, feels (other than small moods) differently overall, knows differently, and does ways ascribed by God even when not noticing that that’s what we’re doing. There are only two kinds of people in this world: those **connected with God** and those **un-connected to Him**. There may be multiple versions of the un-connected to God folks, but un-connected to God is the only distinction that **really matters**. The rest of the criteria are diversions from the main criteria.
3. And, then, there’s the fact of the “resurrection”. Jesus called those connected with Him and His Father at most “falling asleep” from this portion of life. A “second death” is spoken of as an eternity (after this portion of it) un-connected to God in any blessed sense. Imagine God not around to, at least, turn on the light of the sun every morning, and giving fresh air for the lungs where, without Him, there would be suffocation without any relief yet continuous feeling. Hell is not Heaven yet equally exists after what’s Earth. Those connected with God have His promise of Heaven. On some future “today”, those **so-connected** will hear Jesus say to them: “today, **you** will be with Me in Paradise”.

So, **HOW** does this connection to God happen … and **HOW CAN WE KNOW** that we are so-connected with all these then-promised-benefits. **FOR THAT**, we’re given an **outward Means** that’s **set in the history of when it was done (first to Jesus, then to us)**, has the voice of God Himself saying it (though through a human mouth), and a Divine Name attached upon its action casting out any demonic presence as forever as we never again let them back in.

“**BY BAPTISM** do you not know that all of us who have been **THAT** were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him **BY BAPTISM** into death.” And “**IF WE HAVE BEEN UNITED WITH HIM** in a death like His, we shall **CERTAINLY BE UNITED WITH HIM** in a resurrection like His”.

**Application**

Paul was (I think) an effective advertising copy writer. He, however, had a wonderful **Creative Partner** who **provided the main Nike-like slogan** that only got re-directed for a later shoe application (it was first designed for **this application**): **“Just Do It”** is what **Jesus** **COMMISSIONED** in what all the Church knows as His “**Great** **Commission**”. “Make disciples **THIS WAY**”, He said, by “**BAPTIZING ALL NATIONS** **in the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit** and teaching them, then, all that I have spoken and commanded.”

**Jesus “fulfilled all righteous” by being Himself “baptized” / “united” with sinners, dying, living, and eternally living** **THAT WAY** … “**Jesus WAS BAPTIZED**”. **We (“WHO HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED)** have been **THAT WAY “united to Him through death into life … and it eternal**.

Hear Luther again (and I promised I’d come back to it, this time **finishing it**): “Imagine there was a doctor somewhere who understood the art of **saving people from death** or, even though they died, could **restore them quickly to life so that they could afterward live forever**. Oh, **how the world would** pour in money like snow and rain. No one could find access to him because of the **throng of the rich**! But here **IN BAPTISM** there is freely brought to everyone’s door such a treasure and medicine that it utterly destroys real death and preserves all people alive.”

In +His Name, Jesus, with His Father and Holy Spirit, amen.