**“What Baptism Is”**

Isaiah 43:1-7

Romans 6:1-11

Luke 3:15-22

 Baptism of our Lord, Jan. 9, 2022

“**Do you not know**”, Scripture says, “that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus** were **baptized into His death?** We **were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of LIFE**. For **if we** **have been united with Him 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.

**Text**

I don’t think that this can be stated any more directly than it is here: “**United to our Lord’s** death and resurrection, the Father **welcomes children to His family through His Son**” **this way**. So the text only asks: “do you not **know**” **this**, that **WHAT BAPTISM IS.**

**IT’S THAT CONNECTING MECHANISM THAT UNITES**

**US TO THE LORD GOD IN JESUS … AND HIM TO US …**

**WITH IMMENSE ETERNAL BENEFITS:**

**AS SHOWN (AMONG OTHER THINGS) IN THE GOSPEL READING AS THE “PLEASURE OF GOD”, WHAT HE’S ALWAYS HAD BUT**

**GIFTS ALSO TO US THROUGH OUR BAPTISM INTO HIM.**

The **sin** identified in Romans 6 is “**not knowing this**”. Baptism’s not at **nothing thing** like only a **human** and “**outward** sign of some inward conversion” as some would say. It wasn’t “**nothing**” for Jesus. **He was baptized into us**, something happened to Him there. It wasn’t, for Him, a show or sham or waste of anyone’s time (including John the Baptist’s). It wasn’t a **human** “ritual”. In Him, baptism actually **did something**. And **something happens** in ours. It’s the “**Tie that Binds**” / the marriage event (literally) that bonds two flesh into one (a **this-way** disciple to the divine Son of God and Him to us … connected, then, to the Gospel by Lord’s promise for that, **received “by us” only / gifted and welcomed by as “for us”**. It’s **why**, then, we remind our kids of **their baptism** and have sponsors and congregations to **help with that**, raising them **TO BE ASSURE IN IT** / to **REMEMBER IT AND WHAT GOD PROMISES THAT IT DID**. The **birth of Jesus** was His **engagement** (or **betrothal**) to all who will, then, be **married to Him by** **baptismal unity**. His **baptism into us is the Father’s thrusting of Him into that arranged marriage by His baptism / His love and commitment to us given. Ours is, then, our marriage to Him by, most often, the arrangement of our parents and church family, giving us to the Lord. And this UNION makes of us (with God’s Son) inseparable but for the tragedy we have of divorcing ourselves from Him if we’d be stupid choose to do that**.

**Bridge**

And that **connection gift** hits home for me by considering another “nightmare” of sorts without it. More a “**daymare**” (and **more frightening to me it is than any nightmare it is** because, awake, I can get shivers just considering **this** kind of “**lostness**”:

Having gone on my one “cruise”, I can’t much-suppress the idea of falling off a ship / over the rail and un-noticed during the night (sleepwalking or whatever), enduring the fall off the ship and into the sea and surfacing to look at the back end of it (immense with its lights) yet not noticing me and moving away from me fast, leaving me oblivious to my separation from them. There I’d tread in the big waves … and come to the realization of my situation knowing despair will grow huge as **what-follows-in-time** begins.

That’s, maybe, about as graphic a though and feeling I get for what it **is** really like (minimally) being one **un-baptized so disconnected from God in the way He that promises to make connection happen**. It wouldn’t help (I know) if, even, as were large numbers of those also over-board apart from safety of a ship, treading water in a sea or ocean and maybe even in freezing water like how the Titanic movie presented that situation. **“Lost” and “alone” even in a crowd** **is still “lost” and “alone”**,hopeless if hopeless, which is the case for one choosing to be **unconnected to God in and through Christ**.

And the text (in Romans) asks: **“don’t you know” this, that baptism connects to God and every eternal benefit, not least of which can removing the eternal death of condemnation. And it keeps those baptized connected to God’s pleasure, and does so by promise … and that, again, except for the absolute stupidity of divorcing ourselves from Him and that connection to Him / THE VERY DEFINITION OF GRACE.**

## Application

But I’ve heard attempts to **deflate** this **knowledge and appreciation of what baptism is** and so the remembrance of Jesus’ baptism reminds us of the other part of it (ours). Jesus said of it Himself: “go and **make** disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them (of this) and “to observe all that I’ve commanded”. Since the Reformation, protesting “Protestants” have **stepped away from that**, **denying** what the Church **has always upheld in this**: **that baptism is the** **purest delivery of the Gospel (grace) to a person. It’s the concrete action of God (promises attached) that make it all happen that’s “Good”: connection of Him to us and us, graciously, to Him**.

The **results** are exactly what Romans 6 tells us they are … and we should know this): that **our death with Jesus by baptism and burial with Him means also our resurrection with Him from His death (eternal death for us)** “**no longer having dominion” over Him so** also **us in any real eternal sense connected with Him**. …

There are some who **think they don’t need this way of connection**. Many think they **have it in some** **SUBJECTIVE** **way that’s not promised-upon like this is**. Some don’t crave that unity with God (the Gospel washed on and into us with all the benefits attached to it) in the **OBJECTIVE** **way** that God promises to gives it to us through baptism) …

… yet all need it since (as Scripture says) “**all have** sinned” (of every age, even being born into that sin) and “**fall short** of the glory of God”. “**No one** **is righteous**” disconnected to God. King David even said that we are “**conceived** in sin” / sinful from conception. So **no one is (to gain grace) is outside of the need of a promised (and physically OBJECTIVE) connection to God**.

And there are no **morally neutral** statuses. One’s either **connected** or **not (and here’s where baptism is given as such a significant thing)**. One is **baptized-connected to God (in grace) or not**. No **certainty of divine connection** is acquired by **SUBJECTIVETY** **like a feeling**. And I wonder the so-called “faith” of a person who denies what **Jesus Himself commanded in baptizing all nations (ourselves / all of our kids, everyone, including one-self) so as to make disciples** seeing that something even happened to Him in His baptism. **UNITED TO US (God’s Son baptized into humanity) WE’RE UNITED TO HIM WHEN WE’RE BAPTIZED**. **Baptism for us** (as **Romans says and “do you not know this?”**) **UNITES US TO JESUS**. ….

In case we or the world or folks just **not listening to (or rejecting) Jesus’ both Commission and the actions at His own baptism which (as the Gospel writer Mark positions it) begin the Gospel,** **know that regenerative (re-birthing) baptism in washing and the Word of promise is the teaching of the Church as long as it’s been Christ’s Church**. Our own catechism that agrees and answers all the questions about it: “**What is** baptism?”, “What **benefits does baptism give?**”, “What are God’s promises in it and where is that in God’s Word?”, “**How can** water do such great things?”, and “What **does** such baptizing with water connected to His Word and Promise and Name **indicate?**”. Why people claiming to be Christian don’t heed what’s given nor (often even these days) inquire about what it’s been the **central thing to Christendom** is beyond me. In our hymnals (on page 325) anybody can read it for themselves, the answers to all those questions all there, yet **Romans** 6 says it clearly and asks, “do **you not know this?**” …..

A commentator on this section of Luke’s account summarized it this way, and I liked how stated what **Romans** and the **teaching of the Church** **has:** “Jesus’ ministry is **framed by two of His baptisms: one pure washing in water and Spirit and us to begin His journey; the other His bloody baptism of fire and endurance upon a cross**. **Christian baptism** is **into all of that (Christ and work) which continues the pattern of His, first, baptism with water and Spirit and then the fire of His bloody baptism on a cross**. We’re baptized into **all of that that saves us.** **Christian baptism, like Christ’s own**, is trinitarian (exposed in it are we to all three of the persons of the Trinity by the name Jesus instructed us to use and the involvement of all three in the Jordan event). **Baptism (Jesus’ and ours)** **effects union between Him and us / us and Him … and gives the Spirit**. **So connected** Romans makes Him and us **baptized together** that **what the Father said of Jesus at His He says also of every person baptized into Him, that ‘This is my beloved child, in whom I AM well pleased’”**.

That **pleasure of God by our connection to His Son SECURES US** **no matter** **whatever may befall us in our days**. Sickness, health, poverty, struggle, temptation, and even earthly death find answer and **gracious hope (CERTAINTY and SECURITY)** in the phrase: “Yes, but **I am baptized**.” And we are, in the name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit … and for Jesus’ sake. Amen.