

TEXT: Mark 1:4-11

THEME: WHAT DOES BAPTISM HAVE TO DO WITH MY DAILY LIFE?

1. It's a Repeated Battle with a Reemerging Foe
2. It's a Repentant Rejoicing in the Redeemer's Grace

And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." *NIV*

Dear Baptized Children of God,

"I was baptized." In fact, I was baptized June 8, 1952...stop doing the math! Is that the end of it? Is that all there is to it? "I was baptized." Satan would like us to think so. He tries desperately to lull us into viewing our baptism as a pillow on which to fall lazily asleep. On the contrary! Baptism is a call to arms against the old Adam, a commitment to a lifelong battle against our inherited sinful nature, that once was drowned in Baptism, yet reemerges daily to war against us. So Luther reminds us, "A Christian life is nothing else than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever continued. For we must keep at it incessantly, always purging out whatever pertains to the old Adam, so that whatever belongs to the new man may come forth" (Book of Concord).

Baptism means our daily life is a REPEATED BATTLE WITH A REEMERGING FOE

The child carried to Baptism is buried there. What else can be done with a child whose nature is totally corrupt and whose legacy is only sin and guilt? To live, that child must first die. And that's what happens in Baptism. Baptism doesn't make our sinful nature better; it drowns and buries it. All because of God's grace in Christ. On the cross, Christ bore the guilt and paid the penalty for all our sins, both the actual sins in our lives and the original sin with which we were born. When he died as our substitute, we died in him. Through Baptism our share in his death for sin was given to us. But just as Christ did not remain in the grave, neither do we. Just as the resurrection brought him new life, so does our Baptism. Totally clean, we are carried away from that baptismal font, totally alive in faith, with a new heart beating in tune with our gracious Father's will.

If only it would continue that way! But the old Adam, like some tough dandelion, keeps sticking its head up again and again in the lawn of our daily life. So durable is our sinful nature, that, when drowned, it doesn't drop to the bottom of the sea but comes to the surface again and again—not only gasping for air, but trying to squeeze the Christian breath from the believer's lungs. The soul, cleansed by Christ at the baptismal font and committed to loving God above all things, becomes a soul torn and tempted by the same foe to the point that it joins Paul in agonizing, "**What I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing**" (**Romans 7:19**). If we've looked

honestly at our hearts lately, we know exactly what Paul was talking about—this daily, repeated battle with a reemerging foe. But that is not all Baptism means for our daily lives.

Baptism also means our daily life is A REPENTANT (a repentant sinner) REJOICING IN THE REDEEMER'S GRACE

Though we sin daily, just as before our baptism, there is one all-important difference. We may lose the battle—we may lose many battles, but not the war. The old Adam does not have the final word—our Savior does. Through Baptism he sends his Spirit to give us the power to rise from our sins, repent sincerely of them, and be reassured of Christ's forgiveness for them. The new man we are in Christ not only tastes the bitter tears of repentance but also the sweet forgiveness already promised in Baptism. Like the prodigal son, we find the Father waiting for us when we come to our senses. At our baptism he promised to wrap us again and again in his arms, while the angels in heaven rejoice over our repentance, and the old Adam is left to die among the swine. Nor does he ever break his promise, as we discover each time we return home.

But the old Adam keeps punching us, pummeling our kidneys, pushing us into the ropes of life. To disable him, we need to enable the new man. The child of God that we were made in Baptism is not to remain some 90-pound weakling whom our sinful nature can push around at will. Our Father doesn't want us to drag ourselves wearily to him each night, as some prodigal undernourished by the lean rations of the swine. Yet that is what you will be and what you will remain if you continue to feed on the things of this sinful world. If you think that you can call yourself a believer while you live no differently from the unbelievers all around you; if you think you can do whatever you want to do to make you "happy," even though you know it is a sin, even though you know God does not want you to do that, but think, "Well, it's okay because I'll just say I'm sorry and God will have to forgive me," then you will remain a 90-pound spiritual weakling. God our Father wants us to drink deeply of his life-giving Word and to grow strong through his Holy Supper. He wants us to exercise our faith and arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit that is always sharp and always finds its mark, if we but swing it against our enemy. He wants us to pull the robe of Christ's righteousness more tightly around us, so that we stand bravely against our foe and boldly before our Savior God.

My maternal grandparents put their framed baptismal certificates on the bedroom wall opposite their bed. Laurie and I have followed their example and done the same thing with our framed baptismal certificates. Each morning we can look at them and be reassured that we are God's children, who can draw on God's strength for the battle of the day before us. Each night we can look at them again and be reassured that we are God's children, who are forgiven by his grace for the lost battles of the day.

My friends, Baptism is daily, divine assurance that we will win the war. So pray out-loud with me:

**"Destroy in me the lust of sin;
From all impureness make me clean.
Oh, grant me pow'r and strength, my God,
To strive against my flesh and blood." Amen.
(CW 471:2)**