

6/19/22 Christ Fellowship

What We Believe about Baptism and the Lord's Supper
Matthew 3:13-17 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-32

Show the American flag What does this flag mean to you? Why is it important? What does it stand for? Is it really that big of a deal? If I spilled some juice here this morning, would anybody have a problem if I used this old flag to soak it up? What if I used it to dry my car after I washed it? Anybody have any problem with that? Okay.

How about your wedding band that is on your hand right now? Would anybody sell me their wedding band for \$20 bucks? \$100? What's your price? Why not? I need a ring to connect a lure onto some fishing line. Can I borrow one maybe? Why not? It's just a piece of metal.

The American flag is just a piece of cloth and your wedding band is just a piece of metal but both are very, very important and precious symbols, aren't they? Why do we put so much emphasis on symbols in our society? Because what they represent is important to us. The flag helps us to not forget our ancestors and the sacrifices they made to keep us free and our wedding bands help us to always remember our spouses and the love they have for us. A wedding band is also a notice to everybody in the world that, hey big boy, this gal is off the market. Right?

They are just symbols and in and of themselves, as a piece of cloth or a piece of metal, they aren't worth very much. They aren't worth fighting and dying over, that's for sure. But as symbols of what are important to us, they would be worth fighting and dying over. They are that important because of what they represent.

As we continue our sermon series on what we believe, we have come to look at two symbols of the Christian faith. They are just symbols and you can get to Heaven without doing either one so surely they aren't that important, right? Why even talk about baptism and the Lord's Supper if they are just symbols? Well, they are both symbols to help us remember and dwell on and celebrate what God has done for us through Jesus...and they are both commands.

So, we partake in both because we are commanded to but also because we want to. If you saw the flag fall over, would you need a command to go put it back upright? Do you need your spouse to command you to wear your ring? Of course not. You do both because of what they mean to you. You respect the symbol because you respect what it symbolizes.

We have two symbols to look at and so we have two passages of scripture to look at. First, I would ask you to turn to **Matthew 3:13-17** to see why we use baptism as a symbol of what God has done for us. And in a minute, we will look at **1 Corinthians 11** to learn more about the Lord's Supper. We base our beliefs on the Bible, including beliefs about baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Bible records that the New Testament churches practiced baptism and the Lord's Supper, in that order and as symbolic. These churches were made up of people who had been saved and baptized. And so, we believe that this same pattern should be followed today.

And we base our beliefs about baptism and the Lord's Supper specifically on the teachings of Jesus. Baptists often use the word "ordinances" in referring to them because they were ordered or commanded by Jesus himself (Matthew 28:19; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25). Some people call them "sacraments" but that has the connotation of them being required for salvation and nowhere is that taught in the Bible. So, we have two ordinances that we follow, baptism and the Lord's Supper, so let's see why they are so important.

Let's start by reading **Matthew 3:13-17** and we will see Jesus Himself getting baptized, which, right away brings up some problems. The setting is the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus. He is about thirty years old and living in Galilee and he makes the trek over to the Jordan River where John the Baptist has been ministering for about six months or so. And do you want to guess what John's main ministry was? Baptizing people. And John baptized people for the forgiveness of their sins so right away you can see the problem with Jesus being baptized by John. And it was not lost on John that Jesus was sinless so let's see what happens.

Matthew 3:13-17 says, *“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ Jesus replied, ‘Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”*

I have heard lots of funny stories from over the years about people being baptized and lots of wonderful and heartwarming stories and I have a few of my own but John...he wins. He wins the baptism stories, no doubt. Can you imagine how it was when he went to the next preacher’s luncheon and he’s sitting around talking to some other preachers and one of them asks, *“So, how’s your ministry, John?”* *“Oh, pretty good. Been busy. I got to baptize Jesus the other day...”* And the room gets silent. *“You did what? Why? I thought you baptized for the forgiveness of sins. I’m confused.”* *“Well, I tried not to, but He insisted.”*

So, let me ask you, why did Jesus get baptized? Well, Jesus answers that question when John protested by saying, *“it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.”* Now, as John MacArthur explains in his commentary on this passage, (pg. 78-79) John’s baptism and the baptism of the disciples represented cleansing or washing from sins but Jesus had no sin and so He was baptized for several other reasons.

First, and foremost, I believe, is that God the Father told Him to. Jesus, even though He is God, submitted to the Father and often said He did what the Father told Him to do or say. He wanted to remain right with the Father so this fulfilled that righteousness. The Father wanted Him to be baptized to be a model for us. It also validated John’s ministry that was always pointing to Jesus. At the same time, being baptized allowed Jesus to symbolically identify with sinners. Jesus never sinned but could identify in every way with us as sinners. And baptism was part of that.

But just as we are about to see that Jesus changed the Passover celebration to a celebration of Him, Jesus changed the act of baptism to reflect His death, burial and resurrection. Today, we are no longer baptized to symbolize washing away our sins but to reflect the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. We are baptized dead to sin and raised to new life (Romans 6:3-4) as a believer and follower of Jesus and we want everybody to know.

Now, the word “baptism” means literally to be overwhelmed but is almost always used with water. It means to be immersed, completely dipped into water. Some folks sprinkle or pour some water over the head. I’ve even seen water splashed in a guy’s face one time by a so-called pastor but that is not what baptism truly is. True baptism, as Jesus did and modeled, is to be completely dipped or dunked under water.

It is also not to be done to infants since infants can’t make the decision to follow Jesus yet. And that is exactly what baptism represents for us. We are baptized because Jesus commands it in places like **Matthew 28** where He says, *“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.”* A disciple is one who follows Jesus and tells others what he has learned from Jesus. And Jesus says all disciples should be baptized.

I like to compare baptism with a wedding. According to state law around here, you don’t need a wedding to be considered married. And lots of people nowadays just “shack up” without ever being married in the eyes of the Lord. But a wedding or a marriage is more than just a piece of paper or a legal arrangement. It is standing before God, your family and all your friends and making a promise, saying, *“This is the one. I stand by her and I choose her forever and always no matter what.”* And that is important.

Baptism is similar. While it does not save us, it is standing up before God and your family and friends and making a promise, saying, *“Jesus is my One. I choose to follow Him forever no matter what and I want everybody to know it. I am not ashamed.”* So, Jesus modeled it and commanded it for all Christians and so that is what we believe about baptism in a nutshell.

Now, turn over to **1 Corinthians 11** and let's talk about the Lord's Supper. How many of you have ever gotten a text from your son or daughter notifying you nonchalantly that they are about to do something incredibly stupid? You know what I mean. *"Hey Mom, just letting you know me and Johnny are headed to Vegas for the weekend. Might even get married. Who knows? LOL! Smiley face emoji."* And you try not to freak out and tell them they are idiots because you know that won't help. But you sure want to, right?

I think that is similar to how Paul must have felt when he wrote to the church in Corinth. I'm sure he wanted to write in all caps, "HAVE YOU LOST YOUR EVER-LOVING MINDS?" This church was messed up in lots of ways but one of those ways was how they took the Lord's Supper. So, Paul writes them to explain to them the right way to do it. Let's see it in **1 Corinthians 11:23-32**.

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. 30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. 31 But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. 32 Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world."

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper at his last meal with his disciples as part of the Jewish Passover (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-20). Unleavened bread and wine were part of the meal and Jesus indicated that the bread was symbolic of his body and the wine symbolic of his blood. The unleavened bread symbolizes the sinlessness of Jesus. In other places sin is symbolized by leaven or yeast, and thus his body was an unblemished sacrifice for our sins. The wine symbolizes the blood that Jesus chose to shed for us.

Some people believe that the elements (the bread and juice) actually turn into the blood and body of Jesus once you take them. There is no scriptural teaching about that at all. It is purely symbolic but very important. We try to keep the elements as close to the original as possible. We do use special unleavened bread but the juice is usually just good old Welch's grape juice. We don't use wine because we don't want it to be a trigger for somebody with a drinking problem.

And so why do we need to do it? Well, Jesus answers that question with both elements. *"Do this in remembrance of me."* Then Paul adds in **verse 26**, *"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."* The Lord's Supper is a symbolic way to always remember the sacrifice of Jesus.

The sacrifice of Jesus included being whipped, beaten, beard torn out, crown of thorns and crucified to death in the cruelest way humans can imagine to kill a person. And Jesus allowed Himself to be killed like this to pay the price the Father said was due for your sins. Accept it or not, He did it for you. And so, if you do accept it and ask Jesus to be Lord of your life and to forgive you of all your sins, then when you take the Lord's Supper to remember that sacrifice, you need to make sure there is no unforgiven sin in your life.

That's what Paul is talking about when he says not to take it in an unworthy manner. If you walked on the flag and spit on it and tried to burn it, you would not be just dishonoring a piece of cloth. That would be a dishonor to our whole country and especially to the military men and women who fought and died to keep us free. And as the great theologian Merle Haggard said, *"Now you're walking on the fighting side of me!"*

Our church believes that the Lord's Supper is only for born again Christians who have been baptized. And if this applies to you then you should take it but take it only after spending some time in prayer making sure that there is no sin that is

unconfessed and unforgiven in your life. A good model for that is to pray what David did in **Psalm 139** where he said, *“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me.”* And then just be quiet for a few minutes. If you are like me, you will get half that prayer out and God starts telling you, *“You did this. You said that. You thought those things...”*

And then repent of those sins. Turn away from that. Ask God to forgive you and tell Him that you never want to do that again and that you are sorry for offending Him and hurting Him. Part of the remembrance of what Jesus did on the cross is being grateful for the forgiveness that comes with it. First, remember your sin, confess it to God and then forget it. Then focus on the sacrifice, the love, the grace and power of Jesus who died but rose again and lives today.

We are going to have the opportunity for you to do that today. We have the elements down here for us to take the Lord’s Supper and I would love for everybody to be able to take it. But again, if you aren’t a true baptized believer and follower of Jesus or if you just can’t confess that sin in your life, then just pass when it comes by. Nobody is watching and making notes. Nobody will see but God but it is an offense to take it unworthily so just don’t.

But why not just confess those sins right now. You know, both baptism and the Lord’s Supper are great ways to evangelize or preach the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus. Both are somber celebrations that symbolically remember what Jesus has done for us and we want everybody to know we are followers of Him. Are you a true believer? Spend some time with God in prayer and just make sure. So, let’s bow our heads and close our eyes and do that right now as the music plays.