

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on January 9, 2022:**

"Why Baptism? (Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22)"

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman, at church in the Y, shows us that baptism solidifies and soaks us in our triune relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit.]

Introduction:

- Here is some new Y information – our pancake breakfast scheduled for Saturday January 10th has been postponed due to Omicron Covid activity.
- It will probably be rescheduled sometime in March.

- So, Pastor Craig's question for each of us is: "How many of you know or remember your baptism date?"
- There were lots of answers. The earliest date was 1956 – Ron Kelly.
- Now why baptism? It certainly reflects our outward participation in a community of an event that has merit.
- Now, by the end of this message, we'll see that there is something significant going on with our being baptized.
- We'll also see that baptism solidifies that triune relationship we have with the Father, Son and Spirit.

Luke 3:15 (NASB), Now while the people were in a state of expectation and they all were thinking carefully in their hearts about John, whether he himself perhaps was the Christ, 16) John responded to them all, saying, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but He is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the straps of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

- So, John the Baptist was out there crying in the wilderness proclaiming and making Jesus' pathway known.
- John is also baptizing those who accept that proclamation.
- Now, we don't need to read too much into John's statement that Jesus "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

- Now, the baptism with fire that we're going to see in a moment talks about the separation of wheat from the chaff.
- Now, this has always been a passage of interest, because we all want to be wheat and none of us want to be chaff.
- Now, this baptism that Jesus offers – a baptism of fire, Pastor Craig doesn't believe that any of us here will go through a baptism of fire.

- Now, we don't know what this means because this is an escatological phrase that happens in the future when Jesus comes back and restores all things.
- But, there's going to be some heat, but we won't go any deeper into this topic.
- What's important is that we know who we are in that triune relationship we have with the Father, Son and Spirit.
- Baptism of the Holy Spirit reflects our outward expression of an inward commitment.

17) His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

- By being included in the incarnational relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit through Jesus Christ and His incarnation, we can take this concept of annihilation off the table.
- This is not speaking about annihilation, where, some point in time, people will cease to exist if they no longer accept or believe in Jesus.
- This can be part of orthodox understanding, but it's also orthodox understanding to not believe in annihilation.
- It's really a matter of speculation.
- Now, the way we understand this scripture is what Paul has to say about our end-time works, what we've accomplished through the Spirit.
- Now those works we have, not produced by the Spirit, are chaff and will be burned away on Jesus' return and what's left is that gold or the true works of the Spirit.
- Now, anything that wouldn't last through that fiery process is permanently destroyed.
- So, this is not a scripture about salvation but about the works, we produced in this life, as we allow the Holy Spirit to do His works in us.
- So, this unquenchable fire, we can call a purging or a purgative kind of a process, but not punitive.
- It's not a punitive process, because everything that was done at the cross, what Jesus did for us, took care of everything that might be labeled "punitive by necessity."
- This is purging process gets rid of everything that won't last over into the kingdom of heaven – so, it should be considered a positive thing.

21) Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, 22) and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came from heaven: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

- So, this establishes that triune relationship of Father, Son and Spirit.
- We see Jesus in human form, we see the Holy Spirit in bodily form like a dove and we hear the voice of the Father.

Baptism (GCI Statement of Beliefs):

The sacrament of baptism

- We have two sacraments in our belief system: the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
- A sacrament is actually a sacred or holy practice that reflects our relationship with Jesus.
- The Old Covenant had 7 or 8 sacraments and the New Covenant just has 2.

The sacrament of baptism proclaims that we are saved by Christ alone and not through our own repentance and faith.

- We need to realize that whether we are wheat or chaff has nothing to do with our salvation.
- Now, if one landed in that chaff category, that means that we have chosen to repudiate Christ and that relationship with Him in the past.

It is a participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in which our old selves have been crucified and renounced in Christ and we have been freed from the shackles of the past and given new being through his resurrection.

Baptism proclaims the good news that Christ has made us his own, and that it is only in him that our new life of faith and obedience emerges. Grace Communion International baptizes by immersion. (Romans 6:3-6; Galatians 3:26; Colossians 2:12; Acts 2:38)

- Now immersion is what we really need to focus on.
- In fact, immersion means something far more than having every part of our body submerged under water.
- Now, as go deeper into this, we'll see that immersion reflects the immersion that Jesus Himself had in the relationship with the Father and Spirit.
- And, as we'll see, that's going to include us.

What is Baptism in the light of who Jesus is? (From a class of Grace Communion Seminary by Jonathan Stepp – from lecture #3):

The English word “baptize” comes from the Greek “baptizo” and that Greek word has its root in “bapto” – meaning “to dip,” “to immerse,” or “to dye.” The imagery is of something like a piece of cloth being dipped and immersed into a vat of dye so that the cloth is completely soaked through with the dye.

So the first question we ought to ask about baptism is this: what are we being immersed into when we are baptized?

- Baptism is really about what we are being immersed into.

Baptism is the very nature of God's Trinitarian life.

- That's a very solid statement.
- Baptism is more than just being dipped; it's more than being immersed.
- So, how can we say that baptism is the very nature of Trinitarian life?

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, do not just live “with” each other, they have always lived and had their being immersed into each others' existence.

- Now we believe that there is one God and yet there are three separate persons Father, Son and Spirit. So how can there be just one God?
- It's because of this interdependence of the Father, Son and Spirit which is supported by agape love.
- Because they yield to one another, this is represented as oneness.
- Father, Son and Spirit are so immersed in each other, that it represents the very nature of Trinitarian life.

This immersion does not mean the obliteration of their distinctive identities

- So, the Father doesn't become the Son, the Son doesn't become the Spirit, the Spirit doesn't become the Father.
- They maintain their identities as unique persons, just as, we maintain our uniqueness, which doesn't go away, even though we are immersed into the Father, Son and Spirit.

This immersion does not mean the obliteration of their distinctive identities as unique persons any more than our immersion into the baptismal water means that we cease to be ourselves and become water. But this immersion does mean that they are each "soaking" in the others.

- Through baptism, we are literally soaked into the Father, Son and Spirit.
- So, our relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit is more than just a friendship – it goes way beyond that.

The Son is soaked in the Father and the Father is soaked in the Son and they are both soaked in the Spirit, as he is soaked in them. Their lives are distinct but not separate, and they live in a state of being in which they are baptized (immersed) or (soaked) into each other's existence.

- Now, if the Father, Son and Spirit are soaked in each other, what does that mean for you and me?
- Who are we soaked in?
- We're soaked in the Father, Son and Spirit. Have you ever thought of this in those terms?
- Now, being soaked is usually not a positive term, but in this instance, it is a very positive occurrence.
- We want to be soaked in the Father, Son and Spirit just as they are soaked in each other.
- We want to be soaked in that intimate relationship with them.
- This is such an amazing thing.

When the Son became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14) he immersed himself into humanity and thus into our human nature.

- This is what happened through the incarnation.
- Through the incarnation, we talking about God in the flesh being soaked and immersed into human nature.
- God intended for all this to happen, since the beginning of time.
- It doesn't matter what happened with Adam and Eve

He became so immersed in our humanity that Paul says the Son "became sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). This is what is so amazing about Jesus' sinless life.

- So, even though Jesus become sin, He didn't sin, which sounds like an oxymoron, but it isn't.

Even though the Son of God was completely immersed, completely baptized, into our sinful nature – and saw his Father through our sinful, fallen eyes – he did not believe the lies that his human nature told him.

- So the definition of sin has taken a turn and the true root of sin is accepting the lie and believing something we are not and not believing that we are loved and included in the Father, Son and Spirit and not believing that we are God's beloved children.
- So, this faulty belief system is sin, as we would define it here.

Instead, he has trusted his Father while immersed in our nature and has thus undone the fall of Adam by continually living as the Father's trusting Son during this whole time that he has lived within our nature.

- So, this gives us deeper understanding of what Jesus was going through, from His side of the table, so to speak, in that process of accepting humanity into Himself.
- So, this is how, after accepting our sinful nature, Jesus didn't sin.
- These comments explain how.

This means that when the Son of God is baptized into our human nature, when the Son of God immerses himself into humanity by becoming flesh as the man Jesus Christ, it does not undo his existence in which he is immersed in the life of the Father and the Spirit. Even though the Son now lives as man in human nature he does not stop living as God in the divine nature.

- So, Fully God, fully man, and fully soaked in each one of us.
- Can we all say right now, in 2022, we are fully soaked in Jesus Christ?
- So, 2022 is the year of complete soakness – so let's all be soaked together.

What changes when the Son of God is baptized into our human nature is – our human nature! By indwelling humanity as the man Jesus, the Son of God brings us into the immersion he has always experienced in the life of the Trinity. As he is baptized into our nature he also baptizes us into his nature.

As he immerses himself in humanity, he also immerses humanity into the Trinity. His immersion in us changes us, baptizing us in the Spirit of his Father.

Concluding comments:

- So, why baptism? It's being soaked in the nature of the Father, Son and Spirit.
- How, hopefully this understanding brings us to greater depth of what was going on at our baptism.
- We want to share this news of being soaked in Jesus with others.

Closing prayer: