

Restored: Baptism

Matthew 28:18-20

Baptism is:

1. A presentation of restoration

- 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:3-4

2. A portrait of the Restorer

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Colossians 2:12

3. A profession by the restored

- Acts 2:38-39; 1 John 2:3

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West Valley Church
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Didn't we have a great time together last Sunday in celebration of Easter? It was a powerful time of worship, we declared the Good News of Christ's resurrection, we enjoyed wonderful time together in the foyer and our children had a great time together in our children's area learning about Jesus and playing together in the big inflatables. It was a great day as over 700 of us came together to celebrate.

Last Sunday we began a series called, "Restored," and we saw the original design that God had for us – what life was originally like for us in the world, what our relationships with each other were like, and what our relationship with God was like. We saw how all that was lost when Adam and Eve sinned and rejected God, and all of those things were broken, diminished, or lost. But then we saw that God, through Jesus Christ restored the potential for that original design for us, so that we could have peace in this life, that we could have purpose, that we could have a restored relationship with God and people and a place in the Kingdom of God. And hundreds of us responded to that restored life by coming forward in faith to pick up a hand-carved wooden cross.

What we did last Sunday and what we are doing today is exactly what Jesus commanded us to do after he rose from the dead:

"I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, niv)

That's our job as a church – to let people know about Jesus, to help people grow in their faith and to baptize people.

Around here, we say it this way: we introduce people to Jesus, we equip people with a faith that works, and we live as people with purpose. To put it more simply, we love, learn, and live: we love people enough to introduce them to Jesus, we learn about Jesus and grow together, and we live out that faith loving God and loving others.

Today, we are going to see some folks solidify their faith through baptism. This is an exciting day.

Baptism is all about the restoration that we talked about last Sunday, and I want to point out how that is.

The first thing you need to know is that baptism is...

1. A ***presentation*** of restoration.

The act of baptism is a real life, supernatural illustration of what Jesus has done for us. Remember last week several times we talked about the reality that anyone can be a brand new person when they have accepted what Christ has done for them on the cross and his resurrection:

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, nlt)

That person who has accepted what Jesus did for them, and exchanged their life for his resurrection life has become brand new; their old life that was ruled by sin has been washed away, and they are now living a *new* life, empowered by the presence of God to live this new kingdom life, loving God and loving people and sharing the Good News of God’s love with everyone.

A big part of the reason that the Bible commands us to practice baptism is to demonstrate, or make a visual presentation, of what Christ has done for that person. It is like a real-life object lesson or a physical representation of a supernatural reality. The Bible says:

“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Romans 6:3-4, niv)

Baptism presents a picture of a death, burial and resurrection. So understand that this passage is not about water baptism; water baptism is a picture of what this passage is about. Baptism doesn’t save us or cleanse us or give us a new life; baptism represents to our faith community and to the word that we have been saved and cleansed and have new life, through Christ’s death and resurrection.

More than that, baptism is...

2. A ***portrait*** of the Restorer.

While we celebrate your baptism, and we celebrate your new life in Christ, don’t misunderstand; baptism isn’t really about you. It is about the miraculous, supernatural work that Jesus Christ has done for you and in you. The Apostle Paul makes this point when he says in the Bible:

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, niv)

In other words, yes, baptism shows what has happened to you, but more importantly it paints a picture of Jesus Christ, the one who restores your life. Without him, there would be no restoration for you, for any of us, or for all of creation.

When you come to be baptized, you are not saving yourself; you are not cleansing yourself. I'm guessing that most of you have taken a shower today before coming, or at least in the last week. But no amount of bathing can remove the sin that is in your heart. Only Jesus Christ's death and resurrection can restore your life to you. So notice that the Scriptures say:

“For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.” (Colossians 2:12, niv)

All that baptism represents was done for you by Jesus Christ, whom baptism is a portrait of. And that is the model for your new life; your life is to continually be a picture of, and point people to, Jesus Christ.

Baptism represents the new life you have by giving us a picture of Jesus Christ and what he has done for you. So by this act, you are making a public statement about your life.

Baptism is...

3. A ***profession*** by the restored.

You are declaring to the world from this day forward that Christ has restored your life.

The Apostle Peter stood up in front of thousands on the Day of Pentecost to preach the Good News of God's love in Christ. People heard that and cried out – “What do we need to do to have this new, restored life?” Peter answered them by saying:

“Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.” (Acts 2:38-39, niv)

By being baptized, you are declaring to the world in this act, and *from now on with your life*, that this is what you have done and what's been done in you. You are going to spend your life obeying Christ's teachings and the Holy Spirit's leading. The Bible reminds us:

“We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.”
(1 John 2:3, niv)

By obeying Jesus' command to be baptized you are professing that you'll obey him the rest of your life.

When I got baptized at the age of 19, baptism didn't make me a Christian; baptism shows the world that I *am one*. I wear a wedding ring. Does this ring magically

make me married? No, I wear it as a profession to the world that I am married; not just on my wedding day, but I live it out every day. By being baptized, you are making a statement about your life for the rest of your life, that you will follow Jesus.

In the first century, when a Jew became a Christian, people didn't take them seriously until they were baptized. But when they got baptized, everyone knew the person was serious and there was no turning back. At that point, the person would be cut off from their family, they would be an outcast in society, and in many cases would be a target to be killed. Today we don't face that kind of persecution – at least not in *this* country. But baptism should symbolize something significant in your life. Jesus said that we are to be his disciples – Jesus followers: imitators of him. Baptism is the first step in that direction – it is the first part of true discipleship. Baptism is an amazing picture of three bold professions you are making:

1. You have chosen to identify with Christ
2. You have committed yourself to the discipleship process
3. A transformation has and is continuing to take place in your life so that when it's all said and done people only see Jesus through you.

It's all about a total life commitment to being a disciple, a follower, an imitator of Jesus Christ.

So, Jesus loved the undeserving – and now you will too.

Jesus forgave undeserving people – and now you will too.

Jesus refused to flirt around with sin – you do too.

Jesus was absolutely committed to the cross – to sacrificing himself out of love for others – and so are you.

Baptism is your public profession that your life will never ever be the same again, because you are a Christ-follower; you will live out your Christian life in this world for the sake of his work to restore people to Christ and to restore creation.

Would you get baptized if you thought it would cost you something? If everyone would know that you were truly making the kind of profession that baptism presents?

Would you follow Christ in baptism if we announced it in the paper or we ran it on TV and radio – if we used the media to proclaim to the world that you have made a public commitment to turn away from all that's sinful to walk with Jesus Christ? Would you do it if we proclaimed to the world that from this point forward you were a new creation in Christ Jesus?

I'm not asking you to be baptized today unless you are ready to commit your life to being a disciple of Jesus Christ. If you are ready to identify with Him, commit yourself to Him, commit yourself to a total life transformation.

But once you have been baptized – will you live in such a way that your life shouts to the world that you too have been buried with Christ by baptism, raised to walk in newness of life, no turning back?

There is a story about a pastor who, while he was a college student, he served as a summer missionary in East Malaysia. While there he attended a small church. At one of the church's worship services, a teenage girl came forward to announce her decision to follow Christ and be baptized.

During the service, the college student noticed some worn-out luggage leaning against the wall of the church building. He asked the local church pastor about it. The local pastor pointed to the girl who had just been baptized and said this: "Her father said that if she was baptized as a Christian she could never go home again. So she brought her luggage."

I hope you brought your luggage. Because there's no turning back.