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Baptisms  
Georgetown Presbyterian Church

January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Sermon in Three Parts  
Romans 6:1-11

## Part I

Different denominations argue about whether it is better or even permissible to baptize babies or adults. They ask the questions if this is simply about God's grace coming upon us that we can respond to later or is this something we must have responded to in order to be prepared for it? Scholar Paul Achtemeier wrote in his commentary on Romans, "Infant baptism runs the danger of assuming God's grace requires no personal response. Adult baptism, particularly if some confession of faith is required before it is administered, runs the danger of assuming we must in that way make ourselves "worthy" of this gift of grace." The reality is that baptism is baptism regardless of age or depth of faith. An adult being splashed with water is no more able to understand it than a baby held in a parent's arms.

This is a sacramental mystery about how God works, how God offers grace, how God guides our lives, how God restores us from sin, how God ultimately redeems and saves us. There are great scriptural passages to help us understand baptism and which compel us to continue baptism but none of them get us across the finish line to full understanding. We are all left with scratching our damp foreheads asking, "wait, what just happened?" The truism 'God works in mysterious ways' is overused and often insensitively used. But baptism is the proclamation that God works in holy and mysterious ways in and throughout our lives. In baptism, you or your loved ones or your church community does not stand up and say we understand it, only that we acknowledge it and we welcome it. We welcome God's holiness and mystery and beauty into our lives. God is at work through lives of faith and we humbly and grateful accept the sacrament as a joyful sign of this gift.

## Part II

Remember who you are and whose you are is a refrain we use in the church. As the culture screams alternatives in our ears the church whispers that we as God's beloved and we belong to God. The culture says, "You are your title: your value = your identity as a corporate vice president, a partner, a Rev. Dr. You are paycheck: your meaning = our salary. We are your appearance: your worth = your beauty." The culture tells us we are the compilation of our titles, our possessions, our accomplishments, our health, and our social spheres. We easily become prisoner to those idols. In the big bad world, it is very easy to forget who we are.

Baptism, when we experience it ourselves or are privileged enough to witness someone else's baptism, is this powerful reminder that we have been claimed in these waters as God's own. The water helps us remember our real identity, family members in the body of Christ. This is the place where no one knows or cares or remembers your sins or your shortcomings, how little or much money you have, whether you got straight A's or not, whether you made the team or not, whether you got the promotion or not, whether you messed up big time or not, whether you've got it all together or not. There needs to be at least one place in our lives where none of those things matter. And this place is in the church. And this place is symbolized in the baptismal font where God says to us, "I have called you by name you are mine."

## Part III

At the heart of Paul's message in Roman's 6 are words central to our identity as Christians: "...all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death..." We are not baptized, therefore, into lives of bliss and cultural respectability, but into the pattern of Christ.

Baptized into the pattern of Christ means follow the sequence of his life. Jesus was baptized, and then he went and served God and the people of God with all his heart and his mind and his soul. Then Jesus died and miraculously Jesus' rose from the dead. He lived, he loved, he died, he rose. That is the most simplistic description of the pattern of Christ's life into which we have been baptized. Baptism, sacramentally, is a joining to Christ and this is a joining in life and in the death and in resurrection. If you have been baptized, then you are in the middle part of your journey with Christ, you are in the post baptism, pre-death stage. Sorry but it is true. But this stage is your chance to serve. In this time of your life, young or old, you are called to love and serve with all your heart. You come in here to be reminded of your baptism and you go out there to live it out. You go out there knowing that someday you will die and you will go to be with the Lord. But for now, you will pattern your life after Christ's, welcoming children, eating with your friends, welcoming in strangers to your lives, putting your arms around the grieving, cooking food for the hungry, sharing your gifts with the world, telling your gospel stories of good news. You have been baptized into Christ, for God's glory. You have been called as Christ's friends and disciples. You have been commissioned for service in the kingdom. Your baptism is a blessing that goes with you each day of your life.

So you go out in that world, baptized in Christ, and you serve with all your heart and your mind and your soul and you do not forget who you are.

So go into the world in peace. Have courage. Hold onto what is good...