

Singled Out- Welcomed In
Apostles' Creed – “Communion of Saints”: Baptism
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Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 16:9-15 1 Corinthians 10:1-5; Romans 6:1-4

*I believe in the Holy Ghost (Spirit), the Holy Catholic Church
and the Communion of Saints . .*

Q What teams have you watched (in sports, at work, on the stage, etc.) that have truly inspired you? – that seemed to be “magical”?

Q Have you ever seen or been part of a church that truly embodied the “communion of saints”? a church which – which all the time, or at some special moment, was truly functioning in a way that was “magical”? (Spirit-filled)

Q What do you think of when you think of the word church?

Q How does the word ‘church’ feel to you? Positive? Negative?

The church is not our idea, but Jesus’ idea . . (Matthew 16)

13Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi,
he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

14And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah,
and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

15He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

16Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

17And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah!
For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.

18And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church

Q Have you ever considered that as a priority, Jesus wants to “build his church”?

Q How does it affect our faith and sense of priorities in the Christian life when we think of Jesus’ statement in Matt 16:18?

Q What characteristics do you associate with the kind of a church you think Jesus would want to build?

Q Do you see this at NPC? Where do we have most work to do?

Q The Creed calls Christians “saints” and the church “holy”

-- What strengths or weaknesses do you see in using these words?

Q In what ways would it be helpful – as individuals or as a whole church! -- to wear a button with PBPGINFWMY on it? (**Bill Gothard:** “Please be patient, God is not finished with me yet!”)

Every team or group of people has rituals and practices that help mark them out as a distinct group and bind them together.

Q What are some of these in our families? in our nation?

In the Church – same thing . . .

- We have a common document – ??
- We set aside and celebrate on common days – ??
- We have common *songs & prayers* -- ??
- We have a common ritual – Baptism

Q. Have you been baptized? Were you baptized as an infant or an adult?
-- if old enough, do you remember what led you to be baptized?

Q. Why do we baptize? 1st Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus said: *Go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

1st Baptism an act of _____ to Jesus

2nd Baptism is also a **gift of God** that God uses to help us become the kind of community -- the kind of “communion of imperfect saints” that God wants us to be

A. Baptism is a gift from God that points to our faith and can “force us” (helpfully) to go public

Q When is it important to become public with our faith?

- How can baptism help with this?
- When is this hard? When is this easy?
- Have you ever known an experience when in the end it was a relief “to go public?”

Is God nudging some of us here to take this step, or a similar step?

B. Baptism is a gift of God that points us to and assures us of God’s faithfulness and grace in welcoming us into, and wanting us in his family (assuring us that we belong)

Q Circumcision was the Old Testament sign of belonging to God’s covenant people -
- In ancient Israel did you have to be an adult to be circumcised?

Q What message might God have been conveying through circumcision when he wanted it to be administered to children? (*you are in my family until you choose to be out. NOT:- you are out until you choose to be in!*)

Q If Baptism is about our faith – what does this say about baptism and young children or infants?

Q However, if Baptism is about God’s faithfulness – what might this say about baptism and young children or infants? To put it another way: At what age does God begin to be faithful to us? Only when we are old enough to understand his grace?

Read Acts 16: 9-15

14A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. (*high end fabric*)

The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul.

15When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying,

"If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

Q. Why do you think Lydia was baptized? What do you think it signified to her?

Q How do you make sense of the fact that her household was baptized too?

(servants, children, relatives) What do you think it signified to them?

C. Baptism is a Gift of God that reminds us and assures us of what God has done for us specifically through Jesus Christ in his death. The water of baptism points to the shed blood of Jesus.

Presbyterians don't care how much water is used – as long as we see it as a reminder of the death (*the blood*) of Christ. In the act of baptism – whether in sprinkling or immersion -- God wants to speak to us in Baptism through the water, without words, as if to say:

***Long before you were even born, I not only welcomed you in
But I have loved you and your children to the point of death
I have died in your place, my blood was shed for YOU and touches you now . .
just as assuredly as the water touches you now . .
You're covered! Your sins are forgiven!***

Have you experienced God using a sacrament (baptism or communion) in this kind of way? Is it helpful to be reminded of this?

If all of us were to remember that every one of us in the church has been marked by baptism (like wearing the same uniform, having the same name) and so are on the same team

If every single one of us were to remember that Baptism is a gift of God

- Pointing to our faith and our need to go public
- Pointing to God's faithfulness in welcoming us (and others) in
- Pointing to God's faithfulness in sending Jesus to shed his blood and die for us

Would this help us to experience more deeply the "communion of saints"?

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS . .

There's a great story that goes back quite a few years about **Jimmy Durante**

A popular entertainer in the 1920's through the 1960's . .

Apparently, he was asked after World War II to speak to a group of veterans, and he was very busy at the time.

He said, yes, he could do it, but he really could only be on stage for about five minutes and then he had to head off to another engagement.

The organizer was delighted that he said yes and he said

"I'll take the five minutes."

So, Jimmy Durante turned up, he appeared, he went on the stage,

he performed for five minutes . . . and then ten minutes,

and then twenty minutes and then thirty minutes.

And the applause was raucous.

And finally he went off-stage and was asked, "*Well, why did you stay so long? Thank you, thank you. You stayed way longer than you said. Was it just the applause?*"

He said, "Well, it's the applause, yes. But there was some applause in particular. Come and have a look at this."

And the director of the show peered around the curtain

where they could see the crowd, and there

in the front row, there were a couple of soldiers. Each of them had lost an arm. And they were using their good arm to clap with each other.

IMPERFECT BUT PERFECT!

Jimmy Durante continued: "*Every time I looked at that, I couldn't quit. It just grabbed me, it gripped me when I saw what they were doing together.*"