

Wednesday in Advent 3 12/16/20  
Titus 3:1-8  
Sacrament of Baptism, Third Part

I know it's winter in North Dakota, but I wanted to bring my swim goggles, my swimsuit, and even my swim noodle tonight because we are going to talk about swimming.

Baptism has been the focus of our midweek Advent worship. We looked at how our Lord Christ Himself instituted baptism by uniting His Word to water so that it is a washing of new birth. And, we looked at how that washing of baptism forgives sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal life. Tonight, we look at Baptism, Part 3:

For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying." (Titus 3:5-8)

Baptism raises us from the death of sin and creates in us new spiritual life with the desire, the will, the power, and the strength to overcome sin.

You know the challenge of overcoming sin all too well. Martin Luther once commented that though we have been baptized, the Old Adam within us, that is our sinful nature, swims so very well.

Yes, we have been baptized and live in Christ, but it seems we spend all of our time loving sin and living for sin. We are angry, hateful towards God and neighbor, envious, sexually immoral, stingy, lazy, arrogant.

How is it that a poor sinner can lead a God-pleasing life? Well, remember your swim goggles, your swimsuit, your swim noodle? We need to go for a swim. No, I don't mean at your community swimming pool for fun and exercise -- which would be quite difficult in an outdoor pool in North Dakota right now!

What I am saying is REPENT! Listen and heed the message of John the Baptizer, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ... Bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Mt 3:3,8). Repentance is not just being sorry that we have sinned, but sorrow for sin AND faith that God forgives us for the sake of Christ.

Remember that I said we are going to go for a swim? We are going to go for a swim in the waters of our baptism. Martin Luther writes in his *Large Catechism*, "Repentance, therefore, is nothing other than a return and approach to Baptism". Yes, you have been baptized into Christ, but the Old Adam swims so very well, so daily, we return to the waters of baptism to drown your sinful nature with all of its unholy lusts and desires, so that you can resist and overcome sinful, evil desires. Returning to our waters of our baptism in repentance is nothing other than a putting to death of the Adam and rising in Christ, to live before God in righteousness, purity, and innocence

Think of it this way: Pastor likes watching football. And, when he likes to snack, eat; mainly on chocolate licorice and Coke Zero. Again, this is an illustration, so it is not meant to cause offense. But, let's say pastor died. And you know how much liked chocolate licorice and Coke Zero, so you get a back of soft, delicious chocolate licorice and a cold can of Coke Zero and put it before pastor as he is laid out in his casket. What would

pastor do? Well, I would not sit up and eat and drink, why not? I'm died. I have no life in me. I have no appetite.

Daily repentance, going for a swim in the waters of our baptism, means we die to sin, so that we have no desire, no appetite, no longing for sin. St. Paul says it this way in Romans 6,

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Ro 6).

This world, all of its perversity, tries to squeeze us into its mold. The devil comes with all of his lies to make us doubt and act in unbelief. And our old Adam, our flesh is so weak. But, we remember we went for a swim. We have died to sin and been raised to life in Christ to become gentle, patient, meek, loving, and forgiving, and turning away from unbelief, greed, hatred, envy, and arrogance. We can say with the Psalmist, "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart (Ps 40:)."

Let me ask you a question: Where is your baptism certificate? Or, maybe I should ask you: Where should your baptismal certificate be? It should be on your bedroom wall, above you bed, so that it is the first thing you see when you open your eyes in the morning and the last thing you see before closing your eyes in peaceful slumber. Your baptismal certificate tells you who and what you are in Christ. It identifies you as Christ's own child, and reminds you that the meaning and purpose for your life is found in Christ.

Baptism saves us from the devil's jaws and the clutches of death and makes us God's own child. It takes away sin and the love of sin in our

hearts and lives, and then daily strengthens the new creation that we are in Christ.