

# To Remember Our Baptism

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 1/13/2019

At Crossroads United Methodist Church

Waunakee, WI

“Remember your baptism,” we say in our times of baptismal renewal. For many of us here today, that seems an impossible demand. Remember our baptism. I have no memory of my baptism, which occurred, I am told, when I was a newborn at the hospital because of a precarious birth.

And yet we realize that we use the word “remember” in at least a twofold sense. We can mean “remember” in the sense of calling to mind a past event like, “Remember the Packer Superbowl win in 2011.”

But we can also mean “remember” in the sense of waking up, calling to mind something that is true, like, “Now remember what you are to do in the case of a fire,” or, “Remember that public speaking is one of your gifts.”

And I think that’s what the church means when it tells us to remember our baptism and be thankful. Martin Luther, Protestant reformer, said that there is no greater comfort to the Christian, in times of testing and difficulty, than to remember your baptism and be thankful. Why? A major reason is that baptism is a sign that the Christian life isn’t dependent upon what you do but is rather dependent upon what God has done for you in Jesus Christ.

You will note in the story of Jesus’ baptism that Jesus shows up on the banks of the Jordan River to receive John’s baptism. This is the first time in the gospel that we have seen Jesus in action and he is not really in action, not preaching or healing, not even teaching, but rather receiving.

John the Baptist, who seems to know who Jesus really is, is troubled by Jesus coming to him for baptism. Is this any way for a Messiah to act? Coming out here in the desert and subjecting himself to the baptism of this wild desert preacher?

Jesus says that he does this to “fulfill all righteousness.” What is “righteousness”? In this instance, to be righteous means to submit to the will of God, to align oneself with God’s intentions. And remember, that’s what happened in your baptism. This was a public sign, just as Jesus’ baptism was a public sign, of an intention to submit your life to God’s desires and intentions for your life.

Remember, the life you live is not your own. Remember, your life has been commandeered by the God who gave you life. Remember, God not only wants to give you life but also wants to give you meaning in your life, a vocation, a sense of direction, a part to play in the grand panorama of God’s work in the world.

One reason the church offers weekly worship of God is because it’s so easy, in your life in the world, to forget what matters, to lose sight of who you really are and are meant to be.

One of the reasons why when most folks get married they invite family and friends to join them for the wedding is because they want the presence and support of those who are close to them. But it is also good for the visitors at the wedding. Every wedding is an opportunity to recall and remember your own wedding vows.

Looking back on my own wedding, I can’t remember much about it – except for the mix up with the caterers at the reception! Looking back on my own wedding day, I can’t remember what I said or what was said to me by my beloved or the clergy. So I find it helpful to attend a wedding and there to be reminded, “I said these same vows. I promised fidelity just as this couple is doing.”

A few years ago, a national survey ranked 71 professions regarding their perceived honesty and integrity. TV evangelist was sixty-eighth, right after prostitute and right before organized crime boss.

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It seems the more we market ourselves and manage our churches like big business, the less people believe, the less we must look like Jesus, and the less it must seem that we're relying on Jesus. Maybe that's why the church in the United States is not growing.

However, the church in Russia, Africa, and China is growing like crazy . . . where marketing, management, and professionalism are often illegal!

Discipleship is not a program; it's a life that rubs off on another life, seasoning, flavoring, and permeating that life like salt.

Dear friends in Christ, whenever we baptize anyone, we invite the congregation to join in the vows because, as the baptized, these are your vows. You have promised, or it has been promised in your behalf, to submit to the righteousness of God in your life. As Karl Barth once said, "Remember your baptism and be thankful!"