



***Theme: Jesus, Kindness, and the Kingdom of God***  
***“Baptized and Beloved”***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, June 4-5, 2022, at Summit Church, Durango

**Weekly Memory Verse:**

***17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.” – Matthew 3:17***

**VIDEO      Sermon Starter**

Since this summer is our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of moving to Durango to serve Summit Church, I have been thinking about some of those experiences in that first summer in 2002 when the Missionary Ridge fire was burning. There was ash and smoke every where and the fire forced many animals into town. We lived in the parsonage, which is the house the church owns adjacent to the parking lot to the East. We had bears in the backyard most days and even a large porcupine in the tree right next to the house, along with family of racoons that decided our garage was a good place to live because of the owners who left them an entire bag of dog food to enjoy. No need to forage for food!

The most challenging thing was the skunks. The were everywhere, and our first night our dog Mikah decided to introduce himself to one of them, I guess because his is black and white also he thought they

were related?

**GRAPHIC          Jeff-Mikah-Lake**

Here's a photo of us that first summer at one of the beautiful mountain lakes near Durango. Of course, after getting sprayed, he ran into the house to rub himself all over our carpets and anything else he could find. We didn't have our furniture yet as the moving truck would not arrive for another week, so he found it especially helpful to roll all over our sleeping bags in our bedroom!

**GRAPHIC          Mikah Meditates**

I went to the grocery store to get the tomato juice that seemed to be the common remedy I had heard of. There was not internet on my phone in those days so no way to Google the best way to get rid of skunk smell. When I walked into City Market, it was as if EVERYONE knew why I was there because the clerks simply pointed to the aisle with the tomato juice. We washed him and can I just tell you that tomato juice really does NOT work. It just turned him pink and made him smell like a skunk who had threw up tomatoes!

**GRAPHIC          Micah Meditates (can you make him pink Stacey?)**

I didn't take a picture, but we did our best to make Mikah look like he did that day. He was not happy, and he was miserable! Fortunately, we had neighbors who attended the church, Ernie and Maryanne Gregg who are now in the saints eternal, who "smelled our misfortune," and they called another couple in the church who brought us a skunk washing kit they made which actually worked and included ¼ cup baking soda, 1 quart of hydrogen peroxide, 1 teaspoon of liquid dish soap, and this Oxide spray. This does work by the way! While Mikah was not keen on a bath, he hopped right in the tub and was very relieved after this particular bath!

Just so you know, we did NOT use baking soda, hydrogen peroxide, or dish soap in our baptism tub today! We did put in some

water from the Jordan River. The big idea is that we all have things in life, messes like we talked about last week, the cover over us and sometimes even suffocate us. Baptism is meant to be a physical, tangible reminder that we are made new by God through Jesus Christ and his work on the cross. In last week's sermon we focused on the sacrament of Holy Communion, which is a meal of forgiveness that points us to the cross.

Communion and Baptism are meant to be signs of the new Kingdom Jesus will usher and, and his kindness towards us through a meal and being washed clean because we are beloved by God. Today we turn our attention to Baptism, and as we do, let's begin today by remembering what a sacrament is as we call Holy Communion and Baptism sacraments in our tradition.

**SLIDE      A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of the COVENANT between God and YOU.**

I did a wedding for John and Allison Streit this weekend. When we talk about the sacraments, I often use the example of my wedding ring, which is the outward and visible symbol of a covenant made in marriage. The ring is not the covenant itself but is the reminder of promises that have been made. In the same way, the sacraments are outward signs of a covenant that is made between you and God. They are meant to mark us as disciples and give us concrete ways of remembering what God has done and is doing in our lives.

Today we shift our attention to baptism and how it marks us as Christian disciples and is a physical sign of belonging to God's family. One of you gave me this wonderful cartoon not long ago that pokes fun at baptism. I wonder if we can get a slide into our baptismal tub?

**GRAPHIC      It Makes Baptisms a Lot More Fun for Everyone**

It was only a matter of time before someone combined extreme sports and sacraments. Athletes Church Extreme (ACE) of New Zealand has grown a Christian community around a love for Christ and thrills.

"Extreme baptism," as the church calls it, involves chaining new believers to a bungee rope and then taking a leap of faith off a bridge. The cord stretches to immerse the convert waist deep in the river below, as onlookers from the church celebrate with shouts and whistles.

**VIDEO**      **Bungee Baptism** (capture from 1:00 to 1:17)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHTgCbGMuAo&ab\\_channel=heikodougDoug](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHTgCbGMuAo&ab_channel=heikodougDoug)

This type of baptism no doubt inspired this cartoon...

**GRAPHIC**      **Whoopsie Baptism**

It reads, "In the name of the Father, Son, Holy Gh...whoopsie!" and the bungee cord breaks! I discovered all of these doing a Google search for "bungee baptism churches", which came up with 200,000 web pages on the subject. This all points to a powerful part of baptism that I think people are seeking in these cartoons and crazy jumps. **We all long to know AND EXPERIENCE that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.**

The Biblical origins of baptism start in the first book of your Bible, in Genesis 17 where we read the story of Abram who takes the name Abraham. He is 90 years old when God comes him and his wife Sarah and says, "I want to make covenant with you." God says this will be an everlasting covenant: "I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. You will be as numerous as the stars!" In verse 10, God says these words to Abraham...

**BIBLE**

***"And this will be the sign of the covenant between me and you – every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised."***

The Sign of INITIATION into the Old Covenant was circumcision and it was done when children were 8 days old. Then parents had the

responsibility raising their children to understand the covenant and the promises of God. To this day Jews still practice this and babies are circumcised when they are 8 days old. This is the outward and visible sign of the covenant God made with Abraham and Abraham made with God. If circumcision was the sign of the covenant for Jews, what is the sign of initiation into the covenant for Christians? The sign for Christians is baptism. It is the sign that we have entered a covenant with God. God has made a promise to us, and we have given a promise to God in return.

This weekend is the day we remember Pentecost in the early church, which was the coming of the Holy Spirit. We read about that in Acts 2.

#### **BIBLE**

**2 On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. <sup>4</sup> And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit...**

Later in this same chapter, the apostle Peter is preaching a sermon about being a follower of Christ.

#### **BIBLE**

**<sup>36</sup> “So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”**

**<sup>37</sup> Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”**

**<sup>38</sup> Peter replied, “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. <sup>39</sup> This promise is to you, to your children, and to**

**those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.”**

Baptism was the first step into the family of faith. It was a believer’s way of saying I am choosing to follow Christ. I belong to God. It’s interesting to note that in the early church, when people wanted to join, they didn’t attend, “The Apostle’s Newcomer Lunch” or “Drinks with the Apostles.” There were no membership vows to be taken. You didn’t have to look at some chart about what was expected of members. Instead, it was just, **“Meet me at the river and take the plunge! In front of all your family and friends, be baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”** And when you came out of the water Jesus was saying, **“This one belongs to me.”** This was the sign of the covenant. This was how it worked.

**SLIDE      You belong to me!**

Paul does a great job of connecting this idea of circumcision as a sign of entering into the covenant and baptism. He says in Colossians 2: 11-12.

**BIBLE**

***11 When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature.***

***12 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.***

What’s he talking about here? The spiritual circumcision is baptism. Now we are clear that circumcision was the sign in the Old Testament that they belonged to God and God belongs to them. For Christians, we practice baptism as a sign of the New Covenant that we belong to God, that we were made by God to be loved by God, and that we have entered new life with Christ.

**SLIDE      Baptism tells us who we are and WHOSE we are.**

Baptism tells us who we are and WHOSE we are. Baptism is us receiving from God his promise that he will be with us always. In other words...

**SLIDE      Baptism demonstrates God’s claim that we were made by God to be love by God.**

Through baptism, we are meant to be cleansed. Water stands for a bath. This is why water is such a powerful symbol in baptism. Water is cleansing, and it brings new life. When I have baptized adults in the past, I have seen this in their eyes. I remind them that in baptism God is washing away all those sins and stains from their past, and I have seen people weep at this.

Christ entering our lives is also meant to be “water for the soul”. We are meant to remember that story of Jesus who meets the Samaritan woman at the well. She says she is come because she is thirsty, and what is Jesus’ response?

**BIBLE**

**<sup>10</sup> Jesus replied, “If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.”**

There are times when our lives seem to be meaningless, or hopeless, or loveless. It is in those moments we should remember the water of our baptism and God’s desire to fill us when we feel dry. Baptism is also the act that symbolizes the coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives. Once again, I remind you that baptism is a SYMBOL. It is not the thing itself. This is important because sometimes we make the mistake of thinking, **“Well, I’ve been baptized. I must be good now! No need to work at my faith or spend time with God anymore. Been there, done that!”** The coming and moving of the Holy Spirit in our lives is an ongoing process that changes us and shapes us and makes us into the image of Jesus Christ. God has promised in baptism that you would

be made new, that you would be filled, that you are his forever, and that you were made in the image of Christ. I hope you get this picture because this is very, very important.

Remember, there are two parties to a contract or covenant. It's not good enough for only the one person to say "I do" in marriage. We make a promise to God.

### **SLIDE      Baptism demonstrates our promise to Christ**

We've talked about God's part, but we also have a part in this covenant as well. So, let's look at some early church architecture as a way of learning about what our promises are to God. Each of these different kinds of baptisteries tell us something about what we have promised to God. In the first century there were no Christian churches, and as a matter of fact it was illegal to be Christian. They could not do baptisms at the rivers in public anymore, so they moved inside to small homes where Christians would meet for worship. Where do you suppose you would do a baptism in a home—in the bathroom of course? Here is a picture of bathtub in a Roman house from around 120 A.C. in the city of Corinth.

### **GRAPHIC      Roman Home Baptistery**

You see it's not much deeper than the bathtubs in your home. On the night before Easter, converts were initiated in tubs like this. People were standing all around the room and in the doorways. In this act, you would say, "**Lord, forgive me. Make me clean and make me new.**" Does this mean you will be sinless? No, but it means we will strive to live for him, which is what we promise to do in our baptism.

Move ahead another 100 years and Christians are still meeting in homes like these, but now there are more of them, so they knock out the walls in some of their homes. They would build chapels in their houses like this one from around 256 A.D.

### **GRAPHIC      Sarcophagus Baptistery**



You can see behind the vase a Roman Sarcophagus. Persons would be lowered into these caskets, and it symbolized them dying to the person they once were. From this time forward I will be a new creature in Christ. Just as Jesus died, by walking into the casket I am dying to my old self. And as I come out of the water, I am announcing to all that I believe Jesus rose from the dead.

Finally, after 325 A.D. Christianity became legal and by the 6<sup>th</sup> Century larger churches were being built. They could spread out and build beautiful baptisteries like this one from a Byzantine church in the North African city of Sbeitla.

### **GRAPHIC            Byzantine Baptistry**

It's in the shape of a cross and is 45 inches deep so it could accommodate sprinkling, pouring, our immersion. This is how it would work. The night before Easter, converts would descend the steps into the water, saying **"I am united in Christ's death on the cross. I am being buried and cleansed. I am coming up out of the water** and saying to all my friends gathered that I now belong to Christ." Then they would come out the other side a new person. Through baptism, we are making a commitment to publicly identify with Jesus. Baptism is meant to change us. This means we are free to live with Christ as our Lord, but this Lord is someone who gets into life with us. We know this because Jesus was baptized, even though he was perfect. He wanted to show us that he is with us in this messy world. This is what we read in Matthew's gospel.

### **BIBLE**

**<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John.**

In John's Gospel we find the exact location, which was at Bethany, beyond the Jordan. These names don't mean a lot to us since we don't live in the Holy Land. But during the series of sermons, we are going to try to show you where these places are on the map of Israel and show

you some pictures. Let's look at this map.

## **GRAPHIC            Where Jesus Was Baptized**

This was the nation of Israel in Jesus' day. It was not called Israel but was several different regions that were part of the Roman Empire. Each region had their own governor or 'puppet king'.

At the top of the map is the Sea of Galilee. It really is a small freshwater lake that receives lots of rain and is very fertile ground with volcanic soils. When Jesus turned 30, his cousin John was baptizing and preaching in Bethany beyond the Jordan, which you see down below, across from Jericho, just before the Jordan River runs into the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea is the lowest body of water in the world. It is 1000 feet below sea level. The water evaporates leaving concentrates of minerals and very few things can live in the Dead Sea, hence its name. Jesus heads down this direction to meet John where he is already baptizing many people. We went to this location on our last trip to the Holy Land and were able to get in the river and baptize and reaffirm people's baptisms. This next slide will show you what that place looks like.

## **GRAPHIC            Jesus' Baptism Site**

This is what the Jordan River looks like when you get down near the Dead Sea. It is murky water and much smaller than it is when it starts out by the Sea of Galilee. It looks like desert on either side and in fact, here is a view of the area surrounding this part of the Jordan River. As you look at this picture, imagine John the Baptist on the right-hand side, which is modern-day Jordan. Modern-day Israel and Palestine and the West Bank territories are on the left bank. The people would have been standing on the left bank while John the Baptist was on the right bank. He was preaching to them saying, "If you know you have missed the mark, if you know you have fallen short of what God wants, if you need to be made clean then join me in the water. Wade in the water

and God will wash your sins away.”

**GRAPHIC**      **Jeff Baptizing Kenny in Jordan River**

**GRAPHIC**      **Jordan River into the Dead Sea**

From this place, they could see the Dead Sea and know that those sins had been washed downstream to the Dead Sea where they could never live again. What a powerful image of God's forgiveness and grace. This is likely the place where Jesus was baptized by John, and then this happens.

**BIBLE**

**<sup>16</sup> After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”**

**SLIDE**      **Jesus’ Baptism and Our Baptism**

Here is where it all hits the road for you and me. The earliest Christians believed that what happened for Jesus in His baptism is also what happens in our baptism. We follow Jesus in the baptism. We get baptized to wash away our brokenness, just as those who came to be baptized by John.

We are baptized as followers of Jesus Christ. In your baptism, whether you remember it or not—if you were a baby being baptized or young adult or if you were baptized as an adult—in your baptism these three things happen.

**SLIDE**      **Your identity was established.**

God said, “You are my child and I love you and you belong to me.”

**SLIDE**      **You receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

After every baptism, we come together as a community and lay hands on the person and pray for the Holy Spirit to come upon the one who has been baptized. You receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at that

moment. Now it is up to you to live into that and to experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit. But you have the gift of the Holy Spirit by your baptism, and it gives you power, comfort and peace.

**SLIDE      You were ordained to follow Jesus into this great mission in the world.**

You are ordained and commissioned by God to go into mission and ministry in the world. You are not baptized into the pew. Each and every one of you, when you were baptized, were baptized into ministry that you might become the presence of Jesus Christ in the world.

Here's what I want to ask you: **Do you understand the power of these things? Do you know that you belong to Jesus? Do you know that you are children of God and are loved by God and nothing can separate you from that love? Not your own stupidity, not the things that you do, not the things that other people say, not what other people do to you, nothing can separate you from the love of God in Jesus Christ.**

God's love is always reaching out to you. You can run away from it, but God is always reaching out to you with His love. That should shape your life. What does it mean to live as though you are loved by God the Father?

You have the gift of the Holy Spirit, and it is up to you if you will allow the Holy Spirit to work within you—to guide you, direct you, give you power. Are you living according to the power of the Holy Spirit?

Do we understand that God has a mission for our lives? You have been commissioned and ordained by your baptism to go into the world and to follow Jesus in mission and service. Sometimes that is hard and sometimes that requires sacrifice and taking risks, but you were commissioned to follow Jesus in self-sacrifice and in living for other people and for God in the world.

WE are invited to be part of God's Kingdom here and now by

being part of God's mission in the world. I received this video about some of the relief effort you have made possible with your offering in terms of hospitals in Ukraine serving refugees. One of the persons highlighted in this video is Dan from here in Durango, who is now back and I visited with last weekend.

## **VIDEO                    Ukraine Relief**

One of the things Dan shared with me is that he did about 10 percent medical work and 90 percent sharing the gospel with many who wondered where God was in the midst of the pain and suffering. I was reminded as he talked to me of Jesus baptism because Jesus gets in the mess of life with us, and he invites us to join him.

This is how we fulfill part of the mission, the commissioning, and the ordination of our baptisms, to take the light of Christ to other people and to let His love be seen. I'll never forget praying with those families as we left Mexico City and looking up after our prayer to see tears in everyone's eyes because they knew they had not been forgotten, and we knew our lives had been changed forever.

## **GRAPHIC                    Baptism and Dove**

Please listen very carefully. In Jesus' baptism, He points to something very important.

First, Jesus gets in the muck and mire and the rubble with ordinary people like you and me. He is not ashamed to be with us when we are broken nor when we have fallen short.

Second, Jesus points to your identity as a child of God. You are loved by God and that should shape everything in your life.

Third, you have the gift of the Holy Spirit if only you will take advantage of it. Live and walk in the Holy Spirit and you will find power and peace.

Finally, every single one of you has been commissioned by God, by your baptism, to serve God in the world. Somehow and someday,

you are to serve. It might be in another part of the world, it might be down your street. How will you do that in the days ahead?

If you have never been baptized, you can go to our website under the RESOURCES tab and find out how you can do that in this space, or in the Pine River at the end of August. We would love to baptize you if you're ready to be a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ.

We also want you to REMEMBER your baptism, so we have these shower tags we have given out before and now we have them again. They have a prayer on them you can pray each day.

**GRAPHIC          Shower Tab**

“Lord, as I enter the water to bather, I remember my baptism...Wash me by your grace...Fille me with Your Spirit...And renew my soul. I pray that I might live as your child today and honor you in all that I do.”

**GRAPHICS          (Baptism photos from Saturday night)**

And today, if you want to come forward, Julia or I will put water on your head and invite you to remember your baptism and be thankful. Let's pray.

**SLIDE                  Prayer**

*God, we give you thanks and praise that you sent Jesus as our Savior, that you sent Jesus to walk in the flesh, to associate with sinners, to love us and to show us the way. In every act that we see in the gospel, we will learn something about our Lord. In every act we see in the gospel, we will learn something about ourselves, about who you call us to be, about what our lives are meant to be about, and about your love for us.*

*Thank you that you called your children. Thank you for your love, which is so wide and deep we can't even comprehend it.*

*Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit that sustains us and*

*empowers us.*

*Thank you for the great adventure that you call us to—to follow in Jesus' footsteps in ministry to the world.*

*Lord for every person sitting in this room, I pray you would give them bold and courageous hearts—sacrificial hearts to step out in faith and find ways to serve you by serving others. Help us together to follow Jesus and to serve your people. Bless them as they sit here tonight and fill them with your spirit in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## June 4-5 Order

1. Ely welcomes people and says, **“Today we look at how God’s kindness and love comes to us through baptism, and we can know that we are beloved by God.”**
2. Two Songs
3. Jeff welcomes and invites people to wave and be seated.
4. VIDEO Graduation
5. Announcements by Jeff (Check News Section on Website)
  - a. QR code for guests
  - b. Baptism Prayer Focus
6. Invite congregation to prepare their hearts for the message.
7. Sermon
8. Prayer
9. Two Songs
10. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
  - a. Offering SLIDE and Focus (**Worship night** June 10 at 6:30 at Rotary Park and **Summit Outdoors** on June 11 at Falls Creek for Hike and **Saturday night** dinner)
11. Care Ministers (If any are present)
12. Prayers and Closing Thoughts
  - i. Prayer quilt for...Linda Heaton’s friend **Anna Tower** battling cancer
13. Closing Prayer