

**“Remember Your Baptism” Acts 8:14-17 / Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 (1/12/24)**

Today is the baptism of the Lord week. So, I will share about baptism today. Baptism is one of the most important sacraments in the church. Before the Reformation, the church had 7 sacraments. Baptism was one of the 7 sacraments of the church. After the Reformation, the Catholic church still maintained 7 sacraments, while the Protestant church only inherited 2 sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion.

However, when I studied Baptism in the Seminary, it was hard to find some theological materials about baptism. Probably, culturally and historically, we are living in a culture based on Christianity, so most of the studies focused on the arguments about infant baptism rather than adult baptism. So, baptism became something important that we cannot remember. Most Christians in our country, and most pastors in our country, traditionally and culturally, were baptized when they were infants.

At the time of the early church, Christians considered baptism as the symbol of the definition that people could go to Heaven or Hell. Even in this present day, we might think the same way. In the Bible, we can see many stories about the baptism. The story of John the Baptist, the baptism of the Lord, the story

that Peter baptized many people, and the baptism of Eunuch from Ethiopia. John the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus provided baptism to the people in the early church. It was the symbol of cleansing sin and becoming the follower of Christ.

After the generation of Jesus's disciples – we say it was the post-Apostolic age – People believed that if they committed any sins after baptism, they could not go to Heaven. So, they received the baptism as late as possible. They tried to receive the baptism just right before they died. According to the ancient writings of this age, people took 3 years to receive the baptism. During this baptism process, they performed many ceremonies to rebuke the evil spirit of the person who wanted to receive the baptism.

As times changed, the understanding of baptism changed, and theological research and studies on baptism also developed. Now, we understand that baptism is the sacrament that confirms and makes us confess our sinful nature was dead on the cross with Christ, and we were born again with the new life of Christ.

If someone asks me why we should receive baptism, I bring an example of marriage to help people understand baptism more easily. When I had some big trouble with my wife and when I had some big argument with my wife, I tried to

remember the marriage day and to see our wedding photo. Then, it reminds me how much I loved my wife at that time and makes me realize how much I love my wife now. Baptism could also be a one-day event and sacrament. But baptism helps us always remember what confession we made to become Christians, what sacrifice Jesus made for us, and the fact that we live by the life of Christ.

I shared before that I was so sad because I did not have any inheritance of faith. However, one thing I am truly grateful to God for is that I was baptized as an adult, and I still remember the feelings and emotions I felt on the day of the baptism. It was December 17th, 2006. It was the day before I went back to South Korea from New Zealand. The baptism was a great blessing for me. All church members knew that I really hoped to be baptized, but I could not because my parents did not allow me to be baptized. So, I waited for almost a year for my parents to give me permission. I was very thankful that I could be baptized before I went back to South Korea. I still remember the feeling of cold water flowing over my head.

However, when I came to the United States, I learned that most people were baptized when they were infants. If baptism helps us remember our faith, then how can baptism help us if we do not remember our baptism? How can we

remember the baptism that we received when we were infants?

In today's Scripture, we can see a story of Samaria. Samaria had accepted the word of God. Peter and John were sent to Samaria, and they prayed for the new Samaritan believers to receive the Holy Spirit. The author, Luke, explained that Peter and John prayed for the Holy Spirit because Samaria had just simply received baptism in the name of Christ, but the Holy Spirit had not yet come to them.

To understand the relationship between the Holy Spirit and baptism in this story, we need to know more about "John and Samaria" and "Luke." We know that Jewish people did not like Samaria. There is a history of Jews beginning to hate the Samaria and the Samaritans. I am not going to talk about the detailed history today, but we should know that Jewish people really do not like Samaria. Peter and John were Jews. And John was the person who asked Jesus to call fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans. This John came to Samaria to pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Luke is the only gentile author who wrote the Gospel. All other gospels were written by Jews. But Luke was the only gentile. This gentile Luke also wrote

Acts. So, in his writing, there are many stories about how Jesus and the Apostles worked for the Gentiles. He might have included this Samaria story to show how the Apostles and the Holy Spirit worked for the gentile Samaritans who just received simple baptism.

If we see the world in the view of Jewish people, we are Gentiles. And even though we say we are Christians, we are people who never met Jesus physically. Then, how can we remember our baptism? How can we remember the sacrifice of Christ through our baptism? We can remember our baptism because the Holy Spirit was poured upon us when we were baptized. No matter when we were baptized, the Holy Spirit was with us and helped us to remember our Christ.

I remember many emotions on the day of my baptism. I also remember that Jesus Christ was not in my testimony. The pastor at that time required people to give their testimonies before the congregation when they were baptized. He checked my testimony paper before the worship service, and he double-checked if I understood the meaning of baptism and confessed Jesus as the Lord. He told me he checked my faith again because he could not see any sentences about confessing Christ in my testimony paper. At that time, I confidently answered that I knew about baptism and Christ. However, I did not realize my baptism was just

a simple baptism in the name of Christ. I surely started to have confidence in God's presence when I experienced the Holy Spirit on the island, which I shared in my first preaching. Between those two experiences, of course, I experienced a lot of the Holy Spirit's work in my life. But my experience on the island was the work of the Holy Spirit to give me confidence in Jesus Christ.

In today's Gospel Scripture, John the Baptist said Jesus will baptize people with the Holy Spirit and fire. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus, and God confirmed Jesus was the Son of God.

We are gentile, but because of the Holy Spirit, we can remember our baptism. We can know the meaning of baptism because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. So, when we do this reaffirmation liturgy together, I hope we can remember our baptism. I hope the Holy Spirit gives us confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.