



Marked (Part 9) – Believer's Baptism by Immersion

Trevor Joy – October 15, 2017

Good morning, church. How are we? Good? That good? All right! Thirty-six new babies. How incredible is that? Yeah, amen! That's awesome! Think about we do these services multiple times a year, and every time, we have about that many babies who are new life who are joining us, whether born into the family or adopted into the family. It's just this incredible gift in the life of our church. I was glad you guys resonated with one of the names. It was Ty Cobb. A couple of the other services didn't catch that. I was like, "How can't you catch that? That's awesome!" Yeah.

Anyway, I'm excited to be with you this morning. We are in our *Marked* series. We're going to be taking a little bit of a turn here for the next several weeks. We're going to be discussing what we call our *theological distinctives*, our TVC distinctives. Let me explain what those are. They are not what we would call our *foundational beliefs*. Our foundational beliefs for us you can see in our statement of faith on the website, or if you've been through our membership class, we've spent a lot of time talking through that.

Our foundational beliefs for us are really what we hold as fundamental beliefs to what would be necessary to believe, to be a Christian. Those are our foundational beliefs, our fundamental beliefs. Our theological distinctives are not those. Rather, they are theological convictions we hold as a church that would definitely distinguish us from other churches that do hold the same foundational beliefs we do but are specific theological convictions we hold as a church.

The reason why they're important is they really do impact a lot of our ministry, philosophy, and practice. Over the next several weeks, we're going to be taking a deeper dive into what those theological convictions are, what we believe about them, and how they do impact us as a church. Here are going to be the topics the next couple of weeks, just to kind of give you guys a roadmap of what this next month or so is going to look like.

We'll be covering the sovereignty of God, inerrancy of Scripture, complementarianism, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and finally what we're going to talk about today is baptism. It just so happens baptism has fallen on our Celebration Weekend where we get to, as a church, celebrate together the ordinance of baptism. There are going to be some men and women who are going to enter (and have entered) these waters all weekend long. Their testimonies really are the gospel message being proclaimed this weekend.

I'm going to take a few moments before we practice baptism together and celebrate that together as a church. I'm going to take a few moments just to walk through what we believe about baptism in this church and why we practice it the way we do. I won't go long but do just want to walk through that and give us a bit of a primer as a church together.

Let me start with this. I'm going to talk through our statement on baptism. This is what we teach through at membership class, and this is kind of our just statement defining it. We believe baptism is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of his death and resurrection. It signifies that a person's former way of life has been put to death and depicts a release from the mastery of sin.

That's our statement on baptism. Let me walk through briefly just a few things of what we believe about baptism. We believe, first and foremost...

1. *Baptism is to be practiced by followers of Christ.* The men and women who have entered these waters and the few we're going to see here in a few minutes are entering these waters to testify to the saving grace of God on their life. They were at one point far from God, dead in their sin, walking in a way that was according to this world, but God made them alive in Christ.

Last night, there was a young lady who was sharing her testimony. This was before she was baptized. She was sharing her testimony. She is a young adult, probably in her mid-twenties. Her testimony was that, for the majority of her life, she had a really dark past and suffered abuse at an early age. For the majority of her life, the voice she heard was one telling her she was ugly, unloved, and unwanted.

As she shared her testimony last night, when she came to faith, she said, "For the first time in my life, I heard the voice of the Father I always wanted telling me I was loved, and I was wanted." The

look of joy and freedom on her face was a testimony in and of itself. What she was saying was, "God found me. He breathed life into me. He saved me. He redeemed me."

Then she went into those waters as a step of obedience to follow Christ, be baptized, and give a physical demonstration of a spiritual reality that already happened. She was testifying in baptism, "God saved me." Baptism is for followers of Christ.

2. *Baptism is to be practiced by immersion in water.* Now I don't have enough time here to kind of go through the Old Testament nuances of that, so I'll just give a couple of brief New Testament reasons for that. First is the word *baptize* in the New Testament in the Greek is *baptizo*, and it means to submerge, immerse, or plunge. We practice baptism by immersion. The second reason is every baptism we have in the New Testament is a baptism by immersion. So we practice baptism by immersion.

3. *Baptism does not save you.* This outward sign does not automatically or magically convey the inward blessing it signifies. You see examples of that in Acts 8, which we'll spend a little bit more time there here in a minute. Peter comes on a guy who had been just baptized. He calls him out and says, "Hey, you may have been just baptized, but your heart is unregenerate. You're not a follower of Christ." He is telling him, "That's not what saves you. That didn't save you."

For us, we follow in obedience to be baptized, to be conformed into the image of his Son because of the work he did on the cross, not in addition to it, because baptism is a means of *sanctifying* grace, not *saving* grace. Those are a few things on what we believe about baptism. Let me just hit a few points. I'll do a classic three-point sermon here of why we practice baptism.

1. *To follow the example of Christ.* We're going to be in Matthew 3. They'll put it up on the screen for us. Matthew 3, starting in verse 13. Kind of the scene here, just to set it up, is John is baptizing, and then Jesus shows up. We get to kind of watch the interaction. This is Jesus beginning his earthly ministry here, and he is going to show up and ask John to baptize him. Then I love watching the interaction here of what John says. It says...

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water..."

I love John's reaction here to Jesus being baptized. Let me kind of give you the scene. We'll talk about this later in the book of Acts. What John is doing there is he is baptizing in what the Bible calls the baptism of repentance. He is calling on all these people he is preaching to to believe in the one who is come. He is foretelling of Christ who is to come and saying, "You need to believe in the one who is going to come." He is baptizing in water baptism of repentance.

Then Jesus shows up here. John knows exactly who he is, and he says, "You're going to baptize me." You can imagine how disorienting that would be for John. I mean, he says very politely here, "You would baptize me. I almost would prevent this." Jesus says, "No!" What does he say there? He said, "No, this is necessary." Why? "**...for us to fulfill all righteousness.**"

Well, we know Jesus isn't unrighteous, right? He is not unrighteous, so what is he saying? Well, righteousness (using the context of Matthew), another way of saying it is in accordance with God's will, in step with God's will, in conformity with God's will.

So Jesus here in baptism is publicly declaring he is conforming to the will of God, to be the suffering servant Isaiah 53 foretold them. Jesus' baptism was the inauguration of his ministry. As followers of Christ, we inaugurate our journey of faith by walking in obedience in Christ's example in baptism. We get baptized to follow the example of Christ.

2. *To obey the command of Christ.* Matthew 28:19 and 20 is a passage we've hit a lot this year. It says, "**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.**" So the call here for those followers of Christ is to then go and make disciples and do...what? The method. Baptize them into the household of faith and teach them to obey all Christ has commanded.

What was a part of Jesus' ministry here he has now made a part of the church's mission. Go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. We're going to see here in the book of Acts how this has been carried out in the early church. We'll just hit a few places starting in Acts 2, verses 38 and 41.

It says... "**And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'** [...] **So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about**

three thousand souls." Acts 8:12 says, "But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Acts 10 says it this way:

"While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 'Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."

Then the scene in Acts we were referring to earlier. It says in chapter 19, **"And he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They said, 'Into John's baptism.' And Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."** So this is just a snapshot of the role of the baptism in the early church.

This is clearly not exhaustive, but what it does provide for us is a context for the role baptism plays in the kingdom of God, in the story of God. We're baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. This is our initiation into our place in God's story. We are baptized to follow the command of Christ.

I want to pause here, and I just want to recognize there are probably a couple of different questions with which people are wrestling. First, if you have not been baptized, you might be wrestling with the question, "Why not? Why have I not been baptized?" For those who are followers of Christ, if you're wrestling with that question, I really just want to exhort you here. What we've seen here is it's not an issue of preference. It's not even an issue of church membership. Baptism fundamentally is an issue of obedience.

There isn't anything magical in those waters, and they aren't a fountain of youth. They aren't going to save you. What followers of Christ do when we follow the command of Christ and the example of Christ is step into those waters in obedience in baptism we are physically declaring, demonstrating, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is not a *saving* grace but a *sanctifying* grace. It's a prescribed step of obedience for those who are in Christ. For those of you who aren't followers of Christ sitting here this morning and

going, "Of course I haven't been baptized. I don't know what you're talking about," I just want to challenge you.

As you hear these stories this morning, as you hear these stories of men and women who were where you are, you may not resonate with their story specifically, but what I would challenge you to resonate with is the arm of the Lord was not too short to save them. God met them where they were, and his grace is sufficient for them. He breathed new life. What you're going to see on their faces today is hope, and that same hope is available for you.

For the other followers of Christ in this room who have been baptized, you should be wrestling with this question if you're not. That is the question, "Why am I not baptizing?" Those of you who have entered those waters declaring your allegiance to Jesus Christ, your desire to follow him, and have publicly declared you have been renewed by the blood of the Lamb, that you are a follower of Christ, you have also been commissioned to go and do likewise, to make disciples, baptize, and teach.

Why? Because what was a part of Jesus' ministry has now become a part of your mission. This is what I hope resonates with us, church, that we would be hungry to be in those waters as often as we can. As these young people come and get baptized today, you're going to notice they're not in there alone. They're going to be with somebody who has played a significant role in their coming to faith.

Some of them are the people who shared Christ with them and led them to Christ. Some of them are going to be people the Lord used along the way. But the common thread of all these people who have baptized this weekend is they've just recently come to Christ, and the people who are with them are those who the Lord used along in that journey.

We would be hungry to be a part of somebody's journey of coming to faith. The Lord might grant us a front-row seat to life change, because that's what we're getting this morning. We get a front-row seat to see the kingdom move forward. We get a front-row seat to God's saving power. That's what a young girl testified this morning, another just example of just a life filled with abuse and unfortunate things. She said, "When I heard the voice of the Father, what he said to me is I am not what happened to me."

We have that message of hope in us, and we are surrounded by people who don't have it. We would be hungry to be baptizing. We'd be hungry to be in these waters. We'd be hungry to be a part of the mission Christ has invited us into to go make disciples, carry the message of hope, shine that light. We practice baptism to follow the example of Christ and to obey the command of Christ.

3. *To unite with the body of Christ.* First Corinthians 12:12 through 13 says, **"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."**

Ephesians 4:1 through 6 says, **"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."** Listen to this. **"There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."**

Dial into that. One Lord. One faith. One Spirit. One body. One baptism. Baptism signifies we have been washed clean by the blood of Christ. It commissions us to go, but it also brings us into the household of God. As these young brothers and sisters are getting baptized, they're not just declaring they got Christ but they are also recognizing they get us too. The gift of the church is we are baptized into the household of faith, as Ephesians says. We're sons and daughters as a household of God.

Today as they're baptized, they are coming into the household of faith. This is why I want to encourage us. This is why these weekends and these opportunities are so important. You are not just merely a passive observer. Your role this morning is not to just sit and be the listening ear that receives these really neat stories of these people you don't know.

Rather, we're active participants, because here as the body of Christ, we are receiving new brothers and sisters in the household of faith. There shouldn't be anything that rings joy in the household of God more than new life. I just want to encourage and challenge you here this morning, as we receive these young brothers and sisters into the household of faith, what would stir in us is joy that we get a front seat to life change.

On Friday night, I got to perform a wedding. I always start weddings the same way. As the bride is walked down and the audience is standing as they've been watching the bride, while I have the audience's attention, I always encourage and challenge the audience in this way. I'll say, "Hey, you've chosen to be here at this wedding because you want to support this marriage. Your physical presence here is a visible support for this man and woman entering into this covenant union."

I always challenge the crowd, "Don't let your support end here. Don't just be that passive observer who is going to watch the ceremony, is going to eat cake, and is going to take off. Let your presence here be a commitment to invest in the success of this union, this marriage." I want to encourage us, church, in the same way. Don't just sit here and passively hear these stories. Receive these new brothers and sisters into the household of God.

Be challenged by the fact that you're not the one in those waters doing that, and desire and ask the Lord to stir up an angst for you to be in the waters with that new person we're going to be inviting into the household of faith. Also, as a church, let us receive them in such a way that we're saying, "We want to invest in the faithfulness of this new disciple as they follow Christ." Amen? Okay. Let's pray before they come out, and then we'll close with Communion here in a bit.

Father in heaven, I'm grateful for the stories we're going to get to hear today. I just want to pray for courage for these young folks who are going to be entering the water as they're going to be sharing their stories. They're going to be sharing about who they were before Christ. I just pray courage. I pray against just the voice of the Enemy who wants to speak condemnation or shame and just pray right now that your Spirit would empower them with boldness, courage, and joy to deeply, strongly, and boldly proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

It's good for them today. As they step into the waters, they would visibly see, feel, and receive the household of faith, that that joy would ring through this room, we would receive them with great joy, gladness, and excitement and, as a body, commit however best we can to invest in their faithfulness as they follow Christ. I pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.