

What does Baptism mean for daily living?

It means that our sinful self, with all its evil deed and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever.



St. Paul writes in Romans 6: “*We were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*”

Recently, I completed some reflections on Luther's teaching about baptism and its significance for daily living. This is the last of a four part series that is posted on the S.C. Synod's website at << <http://www.sclutheran.org/Lent/Baptism.htm> >>. I wanted to share it with you as today a helpful reminder of how God is at work renewing our baptismal identity throughout the forty days of Lent.

Several years I attended a leadership conference led by Ken Blanchard. He is a successful business man and author of the book, The One Minute Manager who later in his life discovered a loving relationship with Jesus Christ that changed how he looked at business and everything else. In the middle of his seminar based on his book he has written called Lead Like Jesus, he introduced an exercise that illustrates so well Luther's understanding of daily dying to oneself.

He said, “I want to share with you a leadership experience that will help you understand the biggest problem that prevents us from being the kind of servant leaders that Jesus call us to be. All of you know what an Alcoholic Anonymous meeting is like, don't you? Today I invite you to be a part of an Ego Anonymous meeting with me. Now if any of you here never have to struggle with your ego, then you are free to skip this exercise, or take a break.” Of course no one left the room.

He began, “Hello my name is Ken Blanchard and I am an ego maniac. Let me tell you how my ego got in my way this past week. On Tuesday, I was getting ready to pull into a parking space at a nearby grocery store, when an older woman pulled in before me. I got so mad at her and gave her my best “hateful glare.” I thought some very ugly thoughts about this woman because my ego wanted me to believe that I deserved to have that parking place. Then later that same week my wife asked me about some household chores I had promised to do for her. She wasn't ugly about it, but I blew up at her anyway. I told her to quit nagging me. I had too many other really important things to do, and I would get around to these chores when I was good and ready to do them. I saw the hurt in her eyes, but I didn't back down because my ego wanted to have its on way.” Now the reason I am telling you these things today is because I need others like you, who struggle with their own ego demands, who will help me let go of my pride and strong will so that I can live differently. After all, ego E.G.O. really stands for Edging God Out of the center of my life, and it takes community who understands sin and God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ to help us live more faithful lives.

I have attended a lot of Christian leadership seminars over the year and have forgotten most of what was taught. However, I will never forget this one, because like Luther, Ken Blanchard reminded me that my biggest obstacle as a follower of Jesus is my own ego and its demands. It is why daily repentance is so very important for every one of us in living out our baptismal identity with God. It is why our Lutheran worship practice of beginning most Sundays with confession and forgiveness is not meant to be simply a once a week experience, but truly is an opportunity everyday to die to ourselves and rise up to the new self in Christ.

Baptismal Image

One image that can help us appreciate significance of daily repentance is that of an underground sprinkler system. In my yard we have a sprinkler system that draws water from our neighborhood lake. There is a small electric pump that distributes water daily across the yard, so that even in times of drought, the grass and plants are able to thrive and grow. There is a timer inside our house that can be set to come on for regular intervals of watering.



Now just as my yard needs the regular consistent flow of water to keep its roots nourished, alive and growing, in a similar way I need for the root system of my faith in Jesus Christ to be watered through daily prayer and repentance. Through this daily discipline I become more aware of those times when my ego demands its own way, when I stumble over of a sense of false pride, or when I deceive myself about how I have hurt or wounded others. To say it differently the daily habit of confession and forgiveness helps to water the dry and parched places in our souls and our relationships with others, so that we may live more humbly and authentically in a Christian community with others.