

SERMON  
June 22, 2008  
“Baptism”  
By the Rev. Bill Fulton

This morning we’re going to have two baptisms: Andrew MacTavish and his infant daughter, Erin. Baptism is a work of the Holy Spirit that makes us a child of God. Baptism means being made one with Christ.

Every baptism is an occasion of great joy, because it means we get to share in the experience of someone coming to God.

I’d like to tell you the story of a baptism:

A friend told me how she hadn’t been raised in the church and was never baptized. When she was about forty, some friends asked her to a class at church where they were studying the beliefs of the church. She said OK. The third or fourth class they were studying baptism, and the priest said, “there are three negative questions you answer in baptism:

“Do you renounce Satan and all the forces of spiritual wickedness that rebel against God?”

“Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?”

“Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?”

Then there are three positive questions to answer –

“Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?”

“Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?”

“Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord and Savior?”

The priest said: the Prayer Book puts in stark contrast – it’s one or the other.

Have you ever stood up and said, “I renounce evil”?

And if you do, then who are you going to turn to? Who are you going to put in its place?

Who are you going to trust?

Can you say, “I turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as my Savior”?

She said, “Will you baptize me right now?”

So they got a glass of water from the kitchen and went to the back of the church where the stone font was, and the priest asked her the three questions of renunciation and the three question of acceptance. Then he poured three handfuls of water over her head. “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” And she said she felt like she walked out of the church three inches off the ground.

Our Epistle reading this morning from the letter of Paul to the Romans talks about Baptism. Paul writes, “Do you not know that you were baptized into the death of Christ? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

Baptism means we become one with Christ. What Paul is saying is that just as Christ died and was raised from the dead, so we too die and we’re raised to new life. Our old life of sin is put to death and our new life in Christ begins.

Paul says, "So consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

In the Gospel today, Jesus says much the same thing. He says, "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

There's a theme in the Bible that you have to die if you want to really live: you have to give up one thing if you want another, more valuable thing.

So in baptism what we do is we die to our old self and become alive to our new self.

"Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord."

This doesn't mean that we're going to all of a sudden become perfect people and never sin again. Of course we'll fail again and again. But it does mean that we're going in the right direction. We've turned away from evil and turned toward God.

When they baptized a new convert in the early Church, they had them physically turn away from Satan and toward God. They even spit on Satan as they renounced him!

"Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ."

Baptism is like.....opening a letter from God

Baptism is like.....moving out of the shade and into the sun when you're cold

Baptism is like a person saying for the first time, "I'm an alcoholic."

Baptism is like coming to the doctor and saying, "I've got a problem."

Baptism means opening ourselves up to the work of God in us. "Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ."

Today we're giving baptismal candles to Andrew and Erin because this is their second birthday. They can take them out every June 22 and light them as a reminder that today they have started their new life in Christ.