**Wednesday Night Bible Study**

**Wednesday 20 April 2022**

**Queens Chapel UMC \* 7410 Muirkirk Road \* Beltsville, MD 20705**

**Instructor: Rev. Dr. Will Butler**

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**The Gospel of Luke**

**Luke 3:21-22**

**Baptism**

**(Part 1)**

**21**One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself was baptized. As he was praying, the heavens opened,

1. Many people came to John the Baptist to repent and receive baptism.
2. Jesus came to also be baptized.
3. Jesus did not receive baptism because He was a sinner that needed to repent and be cleansed from His sins.
4. He was baptized to completely identify Himself with sinful man.
5. He was baptized to identify with His death, burial and resurrection
6. Jesus’ baptism started His public ministry

21b “As he was praying, the heavens opened”

1. In the Gospel of Luke, we find repeated emphasis on prayer.
2. When other gospel writers describe this occasion, prayer is not mentioned.
3. Only Luke points out that it happened while Jesus was praying—consider the following 3 text…

**Matthew 3:13-17**

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

14 But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

15 Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

**Mark 1:9-11**

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

10 Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

11 And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

**John 1:32—34**

32 Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.

33 And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’

34 I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

**Discussion:**

*Read each Gospel account of Christ’s baptism. Examine each writer’s narrative. Name the differences each writer witness about this important account.*

**Luke 3:22**

“And the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.

1. The three Persons of the Trinity were all manifested at once.
2. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove.

1. The voice of God the Father was heard,
2. The beloved Son was baptized.

“And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

1. The Voice from heaven indicated that Jesus wasn’t just another sinner being baptized,
2. The Voice from heaven confirmed that this was the sinless, Eternal Son of God, pleasing the Father by His identification with sinful man.
3. The baptism of Christ symbolizes our spiritual transformation

**Romans 6:3-4**

3 Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death?

4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

1. Every believer who placed their trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is metaphorically baptized into the person of Christ

**Galatians 3:26-27**

26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.

1. Water Baptism pictures this reality
2. Since we’re united by faith with him, as baptism symbolizes, His death, burial, and resurrection become our testimony
3. The believer has a new quality of life, nature and character

**What do United Methodist believe about Baptism?**

Common frequently asked questions about Baptism:

Q. Does the United Methodist Church now have an accepted understanding of baptismal theology and practice?

* Yes. Our church's position is expressed in the services of the Baptismal Covenant (especially Baptismal Covenant I) in The United Methodist Hymnal, 1989, and The United Methodist Book of Worship, 1992, and in “By Water and the spirit”
* All of these have been approved by the General Conference -- the only body that can speak for the whole denomination.

Q: What does United Methodism fundamentally believe about baptism?

* Baptism is a **Sacrament.** In a **Sacrament,** God uses common elements -- in this case, water -- as means of divine grace.
* Baptism is administered by the church as the Body of Christ. It is the act of God through the grace of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Q: What is the difference between infant baptism and believer's baptism?

* In all forms of Christian baptism, God claims those being baptized, whatever their age or ability to profess their faith, with divine grace.
* Clearly an infant can do nothing to save himself or herself, but is totally dependent on God's grace, as we all are -- whatever our age.
* Most traditions that practice or recognize the baptism only of believers, those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ for themselves in some public way -- practice baptism not as a means of grace by which God saves and claims us, but rather as a further act of public profession and/or an act of obedience to the command of Christ that his followers be baptized.
* That is why these "believer's baptism only" traditions generally refer to baptism as an ordinance -- an act ordained or commanded by Christ -- rather than a sacrament.
* The term sacrament means "an oath" and refers to God's covenant with us and ours in response to God's gracious provision of salvation in Jesus Christ.
* United Methodists recognize the baptism of "believers only" traditions, provided those traditions baptize people in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as generally understood in historic Christianity.
* We offer baptism to people of all ages who have not previously received Christian baptism in any form.
* **We do not rebaptize those who have already received Christian baptism in any form.** Even when the people being baptized are believing adults and are ready to profess their faith, our first emphasis is upon the gracious action of God who establishes the covenant of baptism with us rather than upon the individual's decision.

Q: May we have our baby dedicated instead of baptized?

* United Methodist do not believe in dedicating a baby.
* The theological understandings of the two services are very different.
* Dedication is a human act -- something we pledge or give to God.
* Baptism is a divine act, a pledge and gift God gives to us. Baptism of infants includes the reaffirmation of the vows of the baptismal covenant by parents, sponsors, and the congregation; but chiefly it celebrates what God is doing and will do in the life of the infant.

Q: Isn't it better to wait until they are older and let our children decide for themselves whether or not they want to be baptized?

* Truthfully, we do not wait for our children to decide about being in the family of God than we wait for them to decide if they would like to be a part of our family.
* As parents, we make many decisions -- in matters of health, safety, education, for our children. Of course, they may later reject what we have done for them. But this possibility does not relieve us of the responsibility to do all that we can for them spiritually, as we do in other aspects of their lives.

Q: How about christening?

* United Methodist do not christen babies. Christening is not a separate ritual, but rather historically part of the ritual of baptism. The use of the term christening for the sacrament probably comes from two sources: *chrism* is the word for the anointing oil traditionally used in baptism as a sign of the sealing by the Holy Spirit; second, in the past, children were sometimes actually given their (Christian) names in baptism.
* In United Methodist baptism, parents are not asked for the name of the child, but the pastor does baptize with that name.
* Unfortunately, the term christening has been used sometimes in our history as a way of diminishing the significance of infant baptism or of indicating that it is something different from and less than the baptism of an adult.

Q: Is sprinkling the only way that United Methodists baptize?

* No, our church has always offered to people being baptized and to the parents of infants the choice of sprinkling, pouring, or full-immersion.

Q: May I be baptized again if I feel the need?

* No, because baptism is an act of God, and God does it right the first time. Our side of the covenant relationship with God will need **recommitment and reaffirmation**, but God always remains faithful to the divine side.