

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 17TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

A PUBLIC DISPLAY THAT WE BELONG TO JESUS

Baptism is a visible declaration that our lives now belong to Christ. Just as a wedding ring symbolizes a covenant relationship, baptism symbolizes our union with Jesus.

- **Baptism does not save us, but it is a powerful act of obedience that declares we have been saved by grace and changed by Christ.**

BAPTISM IDENTIFIES US AS CHRISTIANS

Baptism is one of the clearest moments when we publicly identify ourselves as followers of Jesus and members of God's family.

- **It marks a turning point where we stop living for ourselves and begin living for Christ.** The world constantly tries to shape our identity, but baptism declares that our identity is now found in Christ.

THE EXAMPLE

JESUS CAME TO BRING RESTORATION

Jesus came to rescue and restore broken people. Under the Old Covenant, sin was temporarily covered, but through Jesus, sin is fully forgiven.

- Through faith, repentance, and baptism, God offers complete forgiveness and new life. **Repentance is the pathway back to life, peace, and relationship with God.**
- *"Jesus answered him, 'Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John allowed him to be baptized. When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him" (Matthew 3:15–16).*
- *"And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased'" (Matthew 3:17).*

JESUS MODELED OBEDIENCE FOR US

Jesus had no sin to repent of, yet He chose to be baptized in obedience to the Father. He was an example of what God wants from us.

- **Jesus never asks us to walk a road He was unwilling to walk Himself.** Baptism reminds us that obedience matters to God, and it brings pleasure to the Father's heart.

AN ACTIVATION

WALKING WITH GOD IS A JOURNEY

Our relationship with God is not a single moment—it is a **lifelong journey of transformation (sanctification)**. As we continue to surrender to Jesus, God shapes us more into His image.

- God empowers us to live differently—not by our strength but through His Spirit living within us.
- *"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call'" (Acts 2:38–39).*
- *"With many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, 'Be saved from this corrupt generation!' So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them" (Acts 2:40–41).*

EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

After repentance and baptism, we should read 1 Corinthians 12–14 and start to pray for God to use these gifts in and through us. The Holy Spirit gives gifts to strengthen Believers and build up the Church.

- **These gifts help us serve others, advance God's Kingdom, and grow deeper in our relationship with Him.**

JESUS INSTRUCTS US

SOMETIMES IT'S SIMPLY ABOUT OBEDIENCE

Our natural tendency is to resist surrender because **sin has shaped the human heart toward independence from God**. Our hearts naturally want to question, delay, or resist what God asks of us.

- We do not obey because we have all the answers. **We obey because we trust the heart of the Father.**
- *"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 everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19–20).*
- *"If you love me, you will keep my commands" (John 14:15).*

WE'RE RESURRECTED

BURIED WITH CHRIST, RAISED TO NEW LIFE

When we go under the water, it symbolizes the old life being buried with Christ. When we rise again, it declares that we have been made new through Christ.

- **We may still face struggles, but we are no longer slaves to sin, shame, or our pasts.** In Christ, we are truly born again.

- *"Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3–4).*
- *"For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed from sin" (Romans 6:5–6).*

GRACE GIVES US A FRESH START

Following Jesus does not mean we become perfect overnight, but it does mean **we are no longer trapped by our old lives**. Through Christ, freedom and transformation are possible.

- **Salvation is not just forgiveness from the past—it is rescue into a brand-new future.**

A NEW IDENTITY

BAPTISM IS ABOUT SURRENDER

Baptism is not a magical formula. The power is not found in specific words but in sincere faith in Jesus. **God sees the posture of our hearts.**

- How we pray for people is important, but a person's **understanding of why baptism takes place and Whose identity they are adopting** is more important. Baptism represents surrendering fully to Christ.
- *"For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27–28).*

OUR IDENTITY IS FOUND IN JESUS

Above everything else, our lives are meant to be defined by Jesus. The world tries to label us by our past, our status, our struggles, or our background, but Christ gives us a new identity.

- In Jesus, we become part of one family, united by grace. **Our deepest worth, purpose, and hope are found in belonging to Him.**

DO WE HAVE TO?

"Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you (not as the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him" (1 Peter 3:21–22).

A LIFE "PLEGGED" TO GOD

Salvation is more than a one-time experience; it is a life-long relationship. While salvation begins when we place our faith in Christ, obedience becomes the evidence that our hearts truly belong to Him.

- **Through baptism, we publicly commit to walk in obedience, faithfulness, and love for Christ.**

HOW SHOULD ONE RESPOND TO THE GOSPEL?

Belief: Trusting that Jesus is the Savior. **Repentance:** Turning away from sin with genuine sorrow and a desire to follow Jesus wholeheartedly. **Baptism:** Publicly declaring the inward transformation that Christ has already begun in us. **Daily faith:** Continuing to trust, follow, and surrender to Jesus every single day.

WE NEED TO CHECK OUR HEARTS

When we truly understand the weight of sin and the depth of God's grace, our response should be humility, gratitude, and obedience.

- **Instead of asking, "What is the least I can do?" a transformed heart begins asking, "How can I honor Jesus with my life?" Obedience is the natural response of being loved and forgiven by Christ.**

A BETTER QUESTION

- The Christian life was never meant to be built around the question, **"What do I HAVE to do?"**
- When we understand the cross, the weight of our sin, and the depth of God's love for us, we should begin asking the question, **"Jesus, what more CAN I do for you?"** Why? Because He gave everything for us.

RESPONDING TO THE CROSS

- **We all have an opportunity to respond.**
- If you don't have a relationship with Jesus, we can help you **start that journey**.
- If you have recently committed to Jesus, you can make that public through **baptism**.
- If you already follow Christ, take time to remember the cross through **Communion** with gratitude, humility, and worship.