

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen

Holy Baptism.....

- How valuable and important that is to us.

In Holy Baptism.....

- You have been given forgiveness of sins.
- You have been anointed by the Holy Spirit who created faith in you.
- You have been joined with Christ and brought into full communion with Him.
- You have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ.
- You have become a brother or sister with Christ. A son or daughter of God our Father.
- You have been rescued from death and the devil.

In Holy Baptism.....

- You have been given the mark of the cross both upon your forehead and upon your heart for entry into the Kingdom of God.
- The Book of Revelation speaks clearly about this.
- In Holy Baptism, the old Adam, that corrupt and evil nature that you inherited was drowned and you have been resurrected as a second Adam, a new creation without sin.

Holy Baptism is so critical and important to us.

- But I suspect you probably already knew that.

But the question is.....

- Do you remember and live daily with all that?
- Is it treated for you as something present, something to treasure and of very great value each and every day?
- Or.....only as some past event that needed to take place and was done in your life. Sort of like punching a ticket.
- I know for some of you, you treasure your Baptism each day with great value.
- Some of you have talked to me about this and even brought in and showed me or gave to me a copy of your baptismal certificate.

My goal for each of us this morning, no matter where you are at with Holy Baptism, is that as you leave church today.....

- You will even more cherish and treasure and REMEMBER, and yes, even return to your baptism.
- That it will be an EVER PRESENT comfort and strength for you.....
- Not something that was done to you in the past; but rather is present and of great value today and every day of your life.
- I've entitled this message, "Remembering And Returning To Your Baptism."

In our Epistle reading for today, the Apostle Paul helps us out much with this.

- What I invite you to do with me is focus in on 2 phrases from this reading.
- First, from verse 3, "You have died."
- And from verse 1, "You have been raised."
- And, as we move forward, I also ask you to use your imagination a little to help me with how this is presented.
- You will immediately see what I mean by this as we continue on.

Let's pretend.....we people here at Hope have organized a group trip to Israel.

- We have had meetings, organized things and now today we are at Lambert Airport boarding the plane.
- We, of course, have been assigned seats by the airline for the flight.

And now as you have boarded, you realized your seat is right next to mine!

- You might think that is good.
- You might think that is bad.
- I'll let you decide. I don't think I want to know.
- But for our trip, you are sitting right next to the Pastor.

As we reach cruising altitude and have started the long flight, I ask you.....

- "So, what are you most looking forward to during our time in Israel?"

And without missing a beat, you say, "Getting baptized in the Jordan River!"

- I kindly remind you that you already are baptized.....
- So you say, "Then getting rebaptized in the Jordan River."
- I kindly remind you that God hasn't forgotten His promises in Your Baptism, so there is no need to be "rebaptized."

Slightly annoyed, you ask me, "So what do I call it, Pastor?"

- “I want to wear the robe, wade into the river, and get dunked.”
- After all, most of us can’t recall our Baptism. Most of us were baptized at a very young age.

So, I suggest, “How about we call it, ‘remembering your Baptism?’”

- “Sound alright?”
- “How about you and I put on the white robes, wade into the Jordan River, and you get dunked under the water to REMEMBER your baptism and the promises God made?”
- A smile widens across your face, a brightness fills your eyes, and through your simple, “Yeah”, I can tell that your mind is already racing to the river to imagine the moment.

Earlier we said you were buried and you were raised in Baptism.

- The first thing that takes place in Holy Baptism.....
- You have died.
- Under the waters of Baptism, you died with Jesus on the cross.

So, now here we are on the shore of the Jordan River.

- You and I have our white robes on.
- A few other brave pilgrims are wading into the water with us.....
- While a number of our fellow church members offer to take pictures to capture this moment from the warm, dry, viewing area, several feet from the water’s edge.
- In fact, Jerry Lakin is there with his camera. I am trusting and sure he will get some good pictures. He always does.

So, the process begins. You step tentatively onto the slippery riverbed, not allowing your imagination to think too much about what else may be in the water.

- We wade out where it is about waist deep.
- I turn and remind all of us at the river who are within hearing distance that you have been and are already a baptized child of God.....
- And that today we are remembering those promises.

I ask you if you’re ready.

- You give me a strong nod.....
- And before you go under, you hear, “You have been and are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
- And then back you go. Down you go. Under you go.

NOW FREEZE.

- Hold this moment in your mind, this instant, the moment you fall back into the water.
- The shock of the water makes your chest tighten.
- It's so cold you want to yelp, but the water's so gross you dare not open your mouth.

You instinctively shut your eyes and for the moment.....

- You're numb, not breathing, under water, yet laid on your back, and the world has gone black.
- In this momentary drowning, the world has ceased, life has ceased, and all is numb.
- No light, no sound, no feeling.
- Just cold and dark.

This is what it's like to die under the waters of Holy Baptism.

- You died with Jesus on the cross.
- Paul says in Colossians chapter 3, "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ."

That is what God does in Baptism.

- According to His Word of promise, His Last Day judgment on human rebellion was poured out on Jesus on the cross.....
- And in your Baptism, you participate in that dying.

The image of being dunked and the sensation of a temporary drowning highlights what happens even with a sprinkle or a splash.

- For it's not the amount or the source of water, but the Word of promise of God and the very work of Jesus that causes this dying.
- Under the waters of Baptism, you died with Jesus on the cross.

But this moment of death is only passing.

- For now you feel the force of my hand supporting you and pulling you up.
- You emerge from the water, eyes skyward, drawing in a great big breath of air.
- And under that drenched white robe, you find yourself shivering with life.

I ask you now to freeze this moment also in your mind's eye.

- Your face has emerged from the water.
- Your arms are flung back, and your palms are turned outwards.
- Your mouth is opened with a smile as your lungs eagerly fill with your first breath.

- In this moment, you are an image of God's promise.
- Do you have that image now in your mind?
- Emerging from the waters of Baptism, you rise with Jesus to new life.

In Baptism, you have been raised with Christ.

- Colossians chapter 2. In Baptism, you were raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead.
- Romans chapter 6. Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we, too, walk in newness of life.
- Galatians chapter 2. It is no longer you who live but Christ who lives in you.
- Galatians chapter 3. In Christ Jesus, you are a child of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ.
- Titus chapter 2. He saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

And one more Bible verse. Scripture tells us much about Baptism.

- First Peter chapter 3. Baptism now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a clean conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The image of rising out of the water, clean, refreshed, invigorated, regenerated, and reborn, highlights what happens even with a sprinkle or a splash.

- For it is not the amount or the source of the water but the Word and promise of God.....
- And the very work of Jesus that causes this rising.
- Emerging from the waters of Baptism, you rise with Jesus to new life.

You get a towel, dry off, get dressed, and we finish the rest of our tour.

- On the flight back, you take a break from your journaling and come find me.
- For good or bad, on our trip home we do not have assigned seats in the same row.
- You ask me, "Pastor, how do I hold on to this?"

I ask you, "What do you mean?"

- The Baptism. Or, REMEMBERING my Baptism.
- The feeling of dying and rising again.

How do I hold on to this?

- This was a once in a lifetime trip, and I can't come back to the Jordan River every time I need a refill.

I quickly respond, "No, you can't. Nor do you need to."

- It's not the source of the water that makes a Baptism.
- It's not the amount of water.
- It's not even the experience itself.
- It's the Word of God. It's the promise of God.

Thank you for going with me on that journey to Israel and the Jordan River.

- But I now ask you to come back to the reality of where we are this morning, here at Hope Lutheran Church in Granite City, Illinois.
- Do you see the baptismal font?

I invite you to look at it often.

- I invite you each Sunday at least at 2 different times to look at the font and remember your baptism during the service.

The first time, during our time of Confession.

- As we speak the words, "I a poor miserable sinner."

Think about being under the water, cold, dark, and not breathing.

- It is an experience true not just in one-time Baptism, but also in daily repentance.
- Under the waters of Baptism you died with Christ.
- You died with Jesus on the cross.

And the second time to look at the font is during the Absolution.

- When you hear God's Word of forgiveness declared to you for Jesus' sake.
- Perhaps during that time, shoot a glance again at the baptismal font and remember the image and sensation of coming up out of the water.
- As your body shivered and your lungs filled again with air and life, it was an experience of what is true not just in our one-time Baptism but also in our daily repentance.

When Martin Luther was asked.....but we sin daily, do I have to be baptized again.....here was his answer.

- Most certainly we have sinned since our baptism.
- But baptism remains forever.
- Even though we fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always have access to it so that we may again subdue the Old Man.
- But we need not once again have the water poured over us. Even if we were immersed in water 100 times, it would nevertheless be only one Baptism and the effect and signification of Baptism would continue and remain.

And this, also still a quote from Martin Luther.....

- Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism, to resume and practice what had earlier been begun but abandoned.

Dear friends.....Remember and return to your baptism.....daily.

- As a way to do this, I invite you, as you shower and the water pours over you, give the sign of the cross and remember your baptism.
- As you speak of your baptism.....don't say I was baptized; but rather say I am baptized.

Much of the theme for all of the other readings for today than our Epistle reading speaks of worldly values and riches verses treasures towards God.

- You have been given priceless, eternal treasures in Holy Baptism.....that last for all eternity.
- Remember and return to your Baptism, each day of your life.
- There is a reason Martin Luther also said, "There is no greater comfort than Baptism."
- Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 206 in your hymnal.