



Small Group Study Guide for January 10, 2021

Our Savior Lutheran Church and School

Theme: This weekend the Church around the world gathers around Word and Sacrament joyfully celebrating the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord. Last Sunday the Church remembered the Magi's visit on Epiphany. This Sunday the Church rejoices in Christ's Baptism, for here the three preeminent Kings—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit—are all present. We see how God in heaven pours out His grace through His Son's Baptism. Heaven, which before was closed, is opened by Christ's Baptism and a window and door now stand open for us to see through. No longer is there a barrier between God and us, since God Himself descends at the Jordan. The Father lets His voice be heard, the Son sanctifies Baptism with His body, and the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove. Is this not a great manifestation, a truly great sign of how precious Baptism is to God, that He does not abstain from it?

Getting Started:

1. Today we will unsurprisingly be talking a lot about Holy Baptism; what can you remember/what have you been told about your own Baptism?
2. Do you have any underlying questions about Baptism? If so, feel free to write them down and ask/email Pastor or Vicar.

In the Word: Romans 6:1-11. Please read through this section of the text.

3. St. Paul begins with a very important question in Romans 6. His question, "What shall we say? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" is a question that is prompted by our own sinful flesh. Our trespasses are sin against God Himself, yet when we come to Him in repentance, His grace and forgiveness is always more. However, in our sin we want to think, "Cool! God likes to forgive; I like to sin. What a deal!" In response to that mindset, what does St. Paul say? Additionally, what is the just punishment for every sin?
4. One of Scripture's favorite images for Holy Baptism is death. In Romans 6 especially St. Paul says, "We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death." Think about the Sacrament of Baptism, why is the imagery of death so powerful and accurate?
5. Reread Romans 6:5-11. St. Paul proclaims that we have died to sin. The old sinful self has been put to death, drowned in the waters of Baptism, and united to Christ. What is the great future reality of our union with Christ?

Putting it Together

6. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism is always a passive act that happens to the one being baptized—we cannot baptize ourselves. Outside of emergency cases, pastors are the ones called to baptize individuals; however, it is truly not the pastor who baptizes. God is at work through the pastor to personally baptize the individual. He attaches His word of promise to the water, forgives the sins of the individual, and brings them into the Church as a dearly beloved son or daughter. What does this teach us about our own ability to save ourselves and become right with God?
7. Romans 6 is clear, in Baptism we died to sin! With that being said, does the sad reality of our continued sinning negate the promises God gave to us when He baptized us?
8. Our baptismal life has a circular nature to it. Here is a quote from Luther's Large Catechism:

Thus a Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, begun once and continuing ever after. For we must keep at it without ceasing, always purging whatever pertains to the old Adam, so that whatever belongs to the new creature may come forth. What is the old creature? It is what is born in us from Adam, irascible, spiteful, envious, unchaste, greedy, lazy, proud—yes—and unbelieving; it is beset with all vices and by nature has nothing good in it. Now, when we enter Christ's kingdom, this corruption must daily decrease so that the longer we live the more gentle, patient, and meek we become, and the more we break away from greed, hatred, envy, and pride."

We know that we are not to get baptized repeatedly, but how can we live each day within the circular pattern/nature of Baptism?

9. The Small Catechism states the promises and benefits which God has attached to Holy Baptism: "What benefits does Baptism give? (Present tense) It works (present tense) forgiveness of sins, rescues (present tense) from death and the devil, and gives (present tense) eternal salvation to all who believe (present tense), as the Words and promises of God declare (present tense). How do these true and certain words/promises impact you, and how can we use our Baptism as something to cling onto in times of spiritual doubt and attack?"
10. St. Peter declares in 1 Peter 3:21, "Baptism . . . now saves you!" Of course, we know that we are saved by grace through faith, and that that is not of our own doing, but it is God's gift to us. How does 1 Peter 3:21 fit perfectly into our Baptismal theology? (Think about these things: who is the One truly doing the baptizing? Who do we meet personally in the baptismal waters?)

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, by Your death You have purchased and won for us forgiveness of sins, rescuing us from death and the devil and obtaining eternal salvation which You now work in Baptism. Give us Your Spirit that we may believe what You have said, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved," and so receive these gifts of forgiveness of sins, victory over death and the devil, and eternal salvation, as Your words and promises declare. Amen.