

ALL THAT GOD REQUIRES**Matthew 3:11-17**

Intro: Five years ago this past Friday I bought my Ford F150 Pickup. I had limped along with my Jeep Liberty for 10 years. We had bought it used and it served us well but it always had a definite proclivity for rust. Andrew and I had replaced the passenger side doors but by late Fall of 2019 you could practically see through the doors on the other side as well. It was underpowered, which was okay since I'm not into power cars anyway, but it was also manual transmission.

Now this was significant since I was limping along in other ways too. If you remember, you know that in early December of 2018 I had performed a nearly flawless triple salchow, head-over-heels flip in front of a bus full of high school kids and broke my left leg. This meant I could not use that leg to press the clutch. It was then that Kathy decreed that I needed a new truck and I thought, "Why did I not try that triple salchow sooner?!" We did some research, and watched for some year-end sales and, voilà! Made a purchase on Friday evening, December 29.

There was a world of difference between my old bucket of rust that made so much noise you couldn't hear yourself think, and this smooth and luxurious ride with a aluminum body that will never rust.

It was a new and happy beginning. The old was gone and the new was here, and now, exactly 5 years later, I still appreciate that new truck like the day we bought it.

Today, as we look at a brand spankin' new year tomorrow, we are going to celebrate a new beginning for Leia Ringler as we baptize her. It's a great thing to do on New Years Eve.

Leia, has been serving the Lord for a long time but back in November she joined our ABC membership class because she wants to take her service to a new and different level. Since the Brethren in Christ require believer's baptism for membership and Leia has had the Lutheran infant baptism her parents had obediently observed – she, professing faith in Jesus Christ as her Savior, is, in her own way, being obedient by submitting to BIC requirements.

In case you don't know the BIC position on baptism, let me give you a short excerpt from what our denominational position is: (By the way – I have made run 20 copies of the entire piece if you would like one) "Because baptism is only offered to persons who obey Jesus as responsible believers, rather than baptizing infants, the Brethren in Christ provide a ceremony of dedication for small children, as suggested by biblical examples (1 Samuel 1:11, 24-28; Mark 10:13-16).

Baptism is a sign of belonging to Jesus' new Kingdom of all believers. The Church is not primarily a building or an organization but a group of persons who are both part of the global body of Christ and members of a local gathering of believers. Baptism is the outward sign that a person not only believes in Jesus but is also entering into a covenant relationship with responsibility to the worldwide Christian Church and a local congregation of believers." (End Quote)

As in any case where we celebrate baptism here at ABC, we are excited for Leia as she takes this step. And she is in good company. In being baptized she is doing what Jesus did. Listen,

Read Matthew 3:11-17

Right away we see what I've already stated . . .

BAPTISM IS ABOUT NEW BEGINNINGS

- Now, it's important that we don't use this passage as a reason that we should be baptized – though we could. And this is because Jesus didn't have to be baptized. Instead he chose to be baptized because it was the right thing to do. He was making his own new beginning. He was transitioning from a being a builder by trade to being a Savior by divine plan and purpose.
- Baptism is a picture of burial and resurrection. John the Baptizer was baptizing people who were very aware of their sin. His baptism was one of repentance – and it was a message to the world the one being baptized was turning from his sinful ways. Jesus had no sinful ways. He was without sin.
- RT France writes that the "*most obvious way in which Jesus's baptism prepares him for his mission is by indicating his solidarity with John's call to repentance and view of the arrival of God's kingship. By first identifying with John's proclamation, Jesus lays the foundation for his own mission to take on where John has left off. Further, as Jesus is baptized along with others at the Jordan, he is identified with all those, who by accepting John's baptism, had declared their desire for a new beginning with God.*" And G.

Campbell Morgan says, *“In baptism He confessed, as His own, sins which He had not committed, and repented of them before God. He was numbered with the transgressors and bore the sins of many.”* In other words, there is a God-given and God ordained appropriateness to Jesus being baptized. It was simply God’s will, and Jesus was being obedient.

- Suzanne de Dietrich points out that *“It is only later that the profound meaning of this act may be grasped—that by this act, Jesus identified himself with his people, and took on himself, their guilt, and received with and for them the baptism of repentance. Messianic meaning of this act is to be seen from the rest of the story.*
- That is why we easily say to Leia today and to anyone who submits to believer’s baptism that . . .

BAPTISM IS THE BEGINNING OF THE REST OF YOUR STORY TOO

- Does baptism wash away your sins? Nope! Jesus already did that. *What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus!* When we receive him as Lord and profess his Lordship, he takes away the penalty of our sin.
- What does baptism do then? It proclaims that Lordship to the world. It acknowledges Jesus’s death and resurrection in our own lives. Today we lower Leia into a watery grave and lift her back out a dripping representation of a resurrected and obedient soul. Leia’s baptism is a picture of the work Jesus began with his own obedient act in the waters of the Jordan River. It is a perfect picture of her own new beginning.
- And . . .

THAT MAKES GOD HAPPY

- The Spirit of God visibly descended on Jesus and God declared *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”* Jesus accepted the word of God for him in taking John’s baptism. And that brought God’s declaration of pleasure in the obedience it took for that, and also for the unique relationship between God the Father and God the Son.
- Know what? That’s true of us too. Philippians 2:8 says, *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* Because of Jesus’s death on the cross and his resurrection, we too can experience salvation and the pleasure of the heavenly Father as we obediently follow in his Son’s steps.
- It’s what God required for Jesus, so we do what he requires too. Amen.!