

Why We Lutherans Value Baptism So Highly

What Baptism Does For Us

We believe that baptism is more than something Christians do. We believe that God is doing all the action in baptism. In Acts 2:38, Peter told the distressed crowds on Pentecost who asked what they should do, “be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.” That verse leads us to believe that God pledges forgiveness to us in our baptism. In Titus 3:5-6, Paul tells his younger co-worker Timothy, “not by righteous things that we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us, by the *washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*” That verse convinces us that baptism “*regenerates*” us and gives us *new life*. Like a dead battery that has to be hooked up to a source of energy to be “regenerated,” we were dead spiritually when we were born and we needed God to pour fresh life into us. We believe what the Bible says in Ephesians 2:1 that we were all “*dead in our trespasses and sins.*” We could not give ourselves new life, forgiveness or the hope of heaven. But God, in His mercy, has given it all *to us*. As our Lutheran Catechism expresses it: “*Baptism works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe, as the words and promises of God declare.*”

Baptism Is NOT Us Trying to Prove Something About Ourselves

By being baptized, we are not trying to prove something about ourselves. In baptism, we are simply receiving what God is pledging to us: His forgiveness, life and salvation. From the time of our baptism forward, we live as *baptized* children of God. We have been adopted into His covenant family, called to live a life of daily repentance. It makes a huge difference. As we remember each day *who* God has made us to be in our baptism, we are empowered to turn from sin and follow Christ. When we do sin, as we will, our baptism is God’s pledge that He will forgive us. That promise of God encourages us to be honest, confess our sins, claim His forgiveness and seize the Holy Spirit’s power to learn from our mistakes and turn away from sin.

Why We Baptize Babies

Because we believe God is doing all these good things in baptism, we baptize our infants. We believe that the promises of God connected with the waters of baptism present the child with the gift of the Holy Spirit. We then teach our young children Bible stories and Christian songs to nourish their faith so they can grow up believing “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” We also teach our children to pray, to ask for forgiveness for their sins and to trust that God does forgive them because of Jesus. Baptism is not an isolated event in a person’s life. It is the launching pad to a whole new way of life.



Why Baptism Is Still Important to Teenagers

As a teenager, we do a lot of things that show that we are sinners. Sometimes, when others see the sinful things we do or fail to do, they become so disappointed in us that they give up on us. And maybe, we are tempted to give up on ourselves. But our baptism is God’s pledge to us that He will never give up on us! As many times as we have to turn back to God and say “I’m sorry,” He is there waiting to assure us of His love, His forgiveness and His power to give us a fresh start again. His love for us gives us fresh hope when we are disappointed in ourselves. That is why it is so important to live in our baptism and not forget it.

Our Baptism Is Like An Invisible Tattoo

So our baptism is like an invisible tattoo that God places on us that reads: “I love you! I want you as my child! I will give you a chance to start over, no matter how badly you have messed things up!” By faith, we believe that His tattoo is on us, even when we don’t feel so loveable. His Word assures us that God has not changed His mind about us. When Jesus shouted from the cross “It is finished!” His words tell us that it’s a done deal! There is nothing we can add to what Christ has already done to make us acceptable to God.

Parents Can Ask Our Pastors About Baptizing Their Children

Parents can ask our pastors about baptizing their children, even if they are not members of Saint James. Our pastors are willing to answer their questions and listen to their concerns. To contact one of our pastors use any of these email addresses: rstadler@saintjameslutheran.com; rrokke@saintjameslutheran.com; malbrecht@saintjameslutheran.com. Or, call Saint James: 651-457-9232. Baptism is an awesome blessing!