

The Baptism of our Lord  
January 13, 2019

\*CW-S – “Christ, Your Footsteps through the Desert”

\*\*CW-S – “God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It”

Titus 3:4-7  
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### Epiphany at the Baptismal Font

- I. See your past revealed.
- II. See your present revealed.
- III. See your future revealed.

Dear Christian friends,

I’d like to begin with a “SHOW OF HANDS” but just hold on a minute, OK? How many of you **know your birthday** – the EXACT day you were born? I’m not asking if you know that you WERE BORN **once upon** a time – that’s pretty obvious! I’m **asking** if you know the EXACT DAY on which you were born. Now please raise your hand if you do know. I thought so!

SECOND question. How many of you know your REBIRTHDAY – the EXACT day you were **baptized**? THAT DAY is more worth celebrating than our **actual birthdays**! WITHOUT our **rebirthdays** we’d still be what we were on the VERY DAY we were born – “**dead in sin**” – alienated and **separated** from God – slaves of sin and **Satan** – “**objects of God’s wrath**” – heading straight to hell’s eternal punishment. We weren’t LITTLE ANGELS when we **were born**! But what a difference our **rebirthdays make** in our hearts and lives. Paul shows us that here.

Today we see JESUS **baptized by** John the Baptist and the fantastic epiphanies when Jesus was baptized. There were also some fantastic epiphanies when WE were baptized. Today we celebrate EPIPHANY AT THE BAPTISMAL FONT. There **at the font** SEE 1)your past, 2)your present and 3)your future revealed.

#### **I. See your past revealed.**

Paul had left Titus on the island of Crete in the Mediterranean Sea. **Paul** had moved on from Crete – **Titus** was to eventually catch up with Paul – but in the meantime Titus was to “**straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town.**” Titus was also to encourage these NEW Christians to be faithful to God and faithful in LIVING their **new Christian** faith. Right before this Paul had told Titus, “**Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready to do any good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, to be gentle, and to display every courtesy toward all people.**”

HOW do you encourage Christians in living **Christian** – God-centered – God-**pleasing** lives? You don’t crack the WHIP over them – lay down the law and beat them into obedience. You don’t lay a GUILT TRIP on them – shame them into being BETTER Christians. The law can guide us in our Christian lives but only the gospel can PROPERLY MOTIVATE us to want to live Christian lives. So Paul gathers us **around** the baptismal font.

There at the font see your PAST REVEALED. To really understand and SAVOR these verses we need to hear the **one right before** it. “**For at one time we ourselves were also foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by many kinds of evil desires and pleasures.**”

Most of these Cretan Christians were ADULT CONVERTS. They had lived the BETTER SHARE of their lives as **unbelievers** – **heathen**. That’s not true about us. **Most** of us were baptized as babies. Yet IF God hadn’t intervened in our lives at the **baptismal font** we too would have **grown up** UNBELIEVERS. “**Foolish**” – unbelievers foolishly think they DON’T NEED God in their lives. “**Disobedient**” - unbelievers have the attitude that GOD CAN’T TELL them what to believe or how to live their lives. “**Deceived**” – unbelievers think sin is something GOOD – FUN, etc. “**Enslaved by evil**”

**desires**” – LIVING IN sin is being enslaved and controlled by that sin. Even now as Christians with our stubborn sinful natures it’s so EASY TO SLIP into living like that!

That’s the setting for these precious words, **“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward mankind appeared, He saved us ...because of His mercy.”** Notice how Paul PILES UP the words for God’s love for us. **“Kindness”** – God’s goodness expressing itself in action. **“Love toward mankind”** – God not pushing us away in disgust but reaching out to us in love. **“Mercy”** – God seeing us IN THE MESS we’d made and taking pity on us and coming to our aid. **“Grace”** – God’s undeserved love – God giving us the EXACT OPPOSITE of what we had coming. Paul bluntly rules out ANY MERIT or good on our part – **“not because of righteous things we ourselves had done.”**

**“Kindness – love – mercy – grace”** – isn’t that what we saw at **Christmas** – God’s own eternal Son born our Brother to be our Savior. Isn’t that what we see as Jesus TAKES OUR PLACE under God’s law and takes care of everything to save us? Jesus lived for us that **holy, sinless life** WE OWED God. Jesus suffered and died on the cross to PERSONALLY PAY for **every single one** of our sins **in full**. Jesus rose triumphant from the dead on Easter morning and He shares with us HIS victory over death, the devil and hell. THAT’S the **“kindness – love – mercy – grace of GOD OUR SAVIOR!”**

See that **“kindness – love – mercy – grace of God our Savior”** revealed at the BAPTISMAL FONT ON your rebirthday! **“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”** We’re only baptized once – **most** of us don’t remember it because we were babies but see revealed here WHAT GOD DID for us **when we were** baptized and how that changes our lives now.

## II. See your present revealed.

There’s nothing fancy about baptism – it’s all so simple and UNASSUMING. A LITTLE water – the amount really doesn’t matter. A LITTLE water and a FEW words – **“I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”** Water and words yet RECALL Luther’s explanation in the Small Catechism. “Baptism is not just plain water, but water used by **God’s command** and connected with **God’s Word.**”

Here’s why YOUR baptism is so precious and **comforting**. When we were baptized – **“GOD SAVED us THROUGH that washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”** To properly understand Baptism and its priceless blessings we MUST SEE what Paul so clearly shows us here. Baptism is ALL GOD’S DOING – not something WE DO for God. **“God our Savior”** – God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is at work AT the baptismal font THROUGH His Word.

See it – be amazed at it – TREASURE it – LIVE it every day of your life! **“Through that washing of water and the Word”** God took us who **“were dead in sin”** and He **“made us alive in Christ.”** THERE AT the baptismal font God washed away all our sins in Jesus’ blood and He clothed us with Jesus’ perfect life. **There at** the baptismal font God worked saving faith in our hearts and adopted us as His **dear children**. We don’t see that happening WITH OUR EYES – God reveals that IN HIS WORD. The water itself DOESN’T DO that – God does it THROUGH His Word connected to the water.

Paul calls Baptism **“the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”** AT the baptismal font we were reborn – it was our REBIRTHDAY. Jesus once told Nicodemus, **“Amen, Amen, I tell you: Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God! Flesh gives birth to flesh; the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”** Sinful parents give birth to sinful children. Ever since Adam and Eve defied God and fell into sin we’re all born sinful. We’re cursed with sinful natures that hate God – that see God as the enemy – that **“do not submit to God’s law, and in fact, it cannot. Those who are in the sinful flesh cannot please God.”**

But see again what GOD DID for you **at the font** and how that changes your life NOW. **In Holy Baptism** we were reborn children of God. We now also have a NEW NATURE that wants to obey God – that delights in pleasing God. **In Holy Baptism** we were **“renewed”** – made TOTALLY NEW people – with a whole new relationship with God – a **whole new outlook** on life – a **whole new purpose** and goal in life. **“If anyone is in Christ,”** Paul wrote, **“he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.”**

“What does baptism MEAN?” in our daily lives Luther asked in the catechism. It simply means – God HAS MADE me **His child** – a **Christian** – now I go out and live NO LONGER AS an unbeliever and a slave of **sin** and **Satan** but AS A DEAR redeemed child of God. When Satan comes tempting us to **defy** God – when the world beckons us to **ignore** God – when the sinful nature **wants to** PUSH GOD out of our lives we put our foot down and insist, “NO! I’m now a CHILD of God. I don’t want to go back to being a slave of sin and Satan. I have a God who LOVES AND SAVES me – why would I **want to give that up?**”

AT the baptismal font see yes your PRESENT and...

### III. See your future revealed.

**“So that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs in keeping with the hope of eternal life.”** **“Justified”** – God has declared us NOT GUILTY of **sin** – innocent of **breaking** His commandments. God has done that FOR JESUS’ SAKE. It’s another way of saying God HAS FORGIVEN **all** our sins **for Jesus’ sake**. AS baptized children of God we can now live EACH DAY CERTAIN – **sure** – of God’s love and forgiveness. AS **baptized children** of God we still daily fall into **all kinds** of sin. Our Christian lives are FAR FROM perfect. That bothers us. We’re sorry for it. We want to live godly lives. WE’RE not perfect but **we have** the PERFECT SAVIOR who daily and fully forgives all” our sins.

Not only that – AS BAPTIZED children of God we are now **“heirs having the hope of eternal life.”** God has written us INTO HIS WILL **so to speak**. God has promised us HIS HEAVEN as **our eternal home**. We now have GOD’S PROMISE that trusting in Jesus as our Savior we are going straight to heaven when we die. As redeemed children of God we now confidently look forward to “the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting” in that **“new heaven and new earth where God will have made everything new.”** God gave us those promises AT the baptismal font. We can’t wait for God TO KEEP those promises on the Last Day!

I won’t ask for ANOTHER SHOW of hands but do you now see why your REBIRTHDAY is **so special?** What God all did for us AT the **baptismal font** is so worth treasuring and LIVING **every day!** Amen.

APOSTLES’ CREED