

Romans 6:1-10

The Symbols of Christ The Water

Introduction: Good Morning. If this is your first time at Refuge Christian Fellowship, Welcome! We have dedicated this year to reading and knowing the Bible first hand. We're calling it a Year of Biblical Literacy.

This morning we are beginning a series within our series. We're breaking from Our God I don't Understand series to look at the symbols of Christ leading up to Easter Sunday - We'll look at the Water, the Meal, the Cross, and the Grave.

Some of you observe Lent as a preparation for your heart - to realign yourself with the work of Jesus and the resurrection life he brings.

So also taking time as a community of believers to consider these symbols is one way to reflect on our own lives and help bring us in line with truly honoring our savior, and celebrating the resurrection of Jesus for all it's worth in everyday living..

In our Christian tradition we don't think much of symbols or sacraments Meaning they don't share the same depth of meaning for us in this sense of their weight and importance... they're more options than obligations - but for the Jews, early christians and even branches of Christianity today, these still carry great depth of meaning.

Of course we have our own cultural symbols that carry meaning for us.... American flag. Our team logo or our alma mater or favorite consumer products - these carry for many a sense of pride and imbedded memories, they conjure up deep emotion for many people. So in some sense we get the idea behind symbols.

Most Christians know that Jesus himself gave us two sacraments or symbols to observe - they are Baptism and The Eucharist or the Meal.

What is a Sacrament? - a Christian rite that is believed to have been ordained by Christ and that is held to be a means of divine grace or to be a sign or symbol of a spiritual reality.

Now the Bible is filled with metaphor and imagery, symbols and signs. YHWH is a rock. The name of YHWH is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are saved...Those who hope in YHWH

will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;

they will run and not grow weary,

they will walk and not be faint.....Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches.. Whoever abides in me bears much fruit..

C.S. Lewis, in one of his essays, talked about how God did not look around the world finding ways to relate to us but has actually made the world in such a way so as to relate to us.

God - through these metaphors, symbols, signs and word pictures wants to change the way we look at the world - he wants to speak to us through the scripture of course, but also to speak the truths of scripture seen in the world around us.. he wants us to hear his word all around us. To Think and see as the Biblical writers do - when you look at the skies - whether night or day - The Psalmist says, - The heavens proclaim the glory of God and the earth shows his artistry..

That is the world that the Psalmist and the other Biblical writers lived in - a world alive with the presence of God - a world shouting to us about his glory and his presence among us...

It's a beautiful and mysterious thing that God gave us these physical things to relate to us by and to minister to our souls with - he's calling to us through them - they are prophetic whispers telling us about our God - his story, his promises to us, to bring deeper understanding and connection to his story, and to incite deeper trust, deeper hope and deeper love. This is what Poetry does right? and specifically what the Psalms and Prophets do - they don't simply tell us about God, but they

tells us in such a way - They paint a picture, tell a story - that we might have a personally experience with God ourselves.

God wants to speak to us in the ordinary, through imagery and symbols, because the ordinary is where real life is happening. And he wants to use his creation, and our daily rhythms in it to bring about spiritual formation - Faith, hope and Love.

“The kind of Spiritual life and disciplines needed to sustain the Christian life are quiet, repetitive and ordinary” - Tish Harrison Warren, Liturgy of the Ordinary

So this morning I would like to change the way you look at, and think about Water. I want to give you water as part of a daily liturgy.

Water, something that is so common to life, and the survival of the human race. Water - the world is covered in it, 70 % of it anyway. Your body is mostly water - 60 %. We use water everyday - to grow things, to wash and cleanse our food, our bodies, to give life to our physical bodies. We also do a lot of playing in water.. And in this most common part of daily life God wants to speak to us.

1. Water

1. The metaphor of water is used in three main ways in scripture - Life, cleansing for dedication, and judgment or death.

2. Life

1. For Ancient Jews water played a significant role - of course the ancient near east is a dry and arid place - so water always speaks on a personal level of life. And the scriptures speak constantly of “living” or clean flowing water. If you are talking about thirst or drinking - it speaks of fulfillment, life giving, blessing and abundance.

3. Cleansing

1. Water also played a significant role in cleanliness or purity - not just washing their food - but also their bodies. The Red sea and the Jordan crossing are a picture of this - As Israel passes through the sea they are cleansed and dedicated to YHWH - in Joshua - you have a new generation of Israelites who did not

pass through the Red Sea - they pass through the water of the Jordan - an act of cleansing and they are dedicated to YHWH once again as they enter into the promised land

2. Also, the Jews had strict cleanliness codes - especially the levitical priest - When water is spoken of in terms of cleaning or washing it's a metaphor of spiritual filth vs. spiritual purity or holiness. Cleansing from the past in order to be dedicated to YHWH

4. Judgment and Death

1. But in a different sense water was a terrifying thing for the Jew - The seas in the Bible always represent chaos, destruction, and death
 1. Creation - primordial chaos waters and from them God brings life - order out of Chaos
 2. The flood at the time of Noah is a reversal of creation where the chaotic waters cover the earth once again in an act of judgment - that brings cleansing
 3. The Red Sea - is a mixed picture - Israel goes through they are cleansed and dedicated to YHWH whereas the Egyptians go through the water and the waters engulf them in an act of judgment..
 4. Or think of the story of Jonah - You have a giant sea creature that saves the prophet - saves him from what? - The destructive sea.. We see it the other way around right? Jonah is fine in the nice water and then comes JAWS!! and swallows him. But in the Hebrew understanding the sea creature that swallows Jonah is a grace from God, a kind of salvation from the chaotic seas.
 1. These are the biblical metaphors of water - Life, Cleansing, Judgment and death

2. Baptism

1. When we come into the NT the main picture of Water that is used is in terms of Baptism.
2. Now John's baptism is about repentance for sin. This is significant that John is calling Israel to turn to God and repent of their sins. Baptism among the Jews was reserved for Gentiles who converted

to Judaism. - They were being cleansed from their pagan ways and simultaneously dedicated to YHWH. But John, as the one who is preparing the way for the Messiah is saying that Israel itself needs this cleansing and rededication of water baptism at the Jordan.

1. John is in the same location of the Jordan that the Israelites were when they crossed the Jordan, under Joshua to enter the Promised Land, this is no accident - John of course has been called and anointed by YHWH to prepare Israel for the Lord - to make straight paths, to carve out a road for YHWH - he does this by calling Israel back to the place of ancient Israel's baptism - the waters of the Jordan. John speaks of Israel repenting, turning around, turning back to YHWH - being cleansed, dedicated and prepared for the work that YHWH will do. John's baptism was an invitation to the nation of Israel to a new beginning, and a rededication.
2. But Jesus is going to come on the scene and he is going to radically reinterpret and forever change the understanding of baptism - and he's going to bring all of these biblical water metaphors together
3. So Jesus comes along one day and insist that John baptize him - They have a small argument about how John thinks that Jesus is the one who should baptize him and how all of this is backwards - Jesus wins the argument, of course, and John baptizes Jesus.
 1. Now, the reader already knows that Jesus doesn't need repentance, he has no sin.. so what is this all about? When Jesus comes up out of the water something radical happens - **"Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."** - At Jesus' baptism the divide of heaven and earth is torn open, the Spirit is poured out on Jesus, and the Father speaks his words of love and affirmation over him.
 2. There is a lot going on in Jesus' baptism - his anointing with the Spirit, his taking up the role and mantle of Israel, but for the sake of time and our subject, we will pass over them. Now we don't

necessarily see the tying in of the water themes here - But Jesus baptism is actually a foreshadow of his atoning death, burial and his resurrection. - this is what will bring, ultimate glory to the Father, the Spirit into and upon the world and will tear open the divide of heaven and earth.

3. Later in the narrative of Jesus, the gospels record two times that Jesus refers to another baptism that he will undergo - a baptism of judgment and death.
 1. In the first instance - James and John, disciples of Jesus, are asking to sit on the right and left hand of Jesus when He comes into his kingdom - Jesus responds, **“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”**
 2. And then again in Luke, - **“I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!**
 3. Jesus death is a kind of baptism - At the cross Jesus is judged for the sins of the world, he takes the place of the oppressor, the rebellious, the transgressor and sinner. He is judged as it were under the waters of the Red Sea - like Pharaoh and his army - so that God’s people can come out safely to the other side -washed and dedicated to YHWH. Jesus at the cross undergoes a kind of de-creation - where the waters cover him in judgment, and he is separated from the Father who is life.
 1. Listen to the words of Psalm 69 A messianic Psalm in light of all this - **“Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God. Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me. I am forced to restore what I did not steal....Rescue me from the mire, do not**

let me sink, deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep waters. Do not let the floodwaters engulf me or the depths swallow me up or the pit close its mouth over me.” - Psalm 69:1-4; 14-15

2. After Jesus' death and resurrection he then commissions his disciples and followers to go out into the world and proclaim his victory baptizing all who believe, in his name...
3. Baptism becomes a rite of entry into the church. But it isn't until we get to Paul that all these things are fully tied together and then Paul shows what this actually means for us, and our daily following of Jesus.

3. Paul's interpretation or understanding of Baptism - (Romans 6:1-14)

1. We were baptized into Jesus' death - buried with him in baptism.. in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God the Father, we too might walk in newness of life..
2. Our Christian understanding of baptism as sacred ritual act of identifying with Jesus' death (Dying his death) and being raised in his resurrection - Comes from Paul. But Paul doesn't stop at the ritual — It's a physical act - that represent a greater reality. Baptism is not only an act or sacrament to fulfill but a life that we are called to live. - My life of sin, selfishness, and self- governance has been put to death and buried with Jesus in his death and burial, The life I am now living, I live, not for me, but for Jesus - because he loved me and gave himself for me, I live for other because this is what Jesus did for me, and I live in or under the Newness of Life or resurrection life - because that is the Life that Jesus now lives.
 1. Baptism then, is about living in a whole new way -it's whole life participation with Jesus. - it's about operating and relating to God as insiders and not outsiders, as sons and daughters, not slaves, and under grace, not law.

Closing: Next time you take a shower, wash your hands, wash your food.. go to the beach, or the lake .etc -

1. Remember Jesus' Baptism

1. The waters of Judgment that overwhelmed Jesus. Remember the sacrificial death that he died in your place so that you could be brought through judgment unharmed, in order to be God's Spirit filled child and live the new life of God, here and now.
2. Jesus is the true and greater Jonah who is cast into the sea of God's judgment so we pagan, sinning and sinned against, people can experience the calm of God's peace and come to glorify him. Remember that, think on that - next time you see water.
3. The Fox and the Fleas - Jesus is the ball of wool. The spotless lamb of God allows the evil of the whole world to be concentrated on himself. He takes the weight of the world's evil upon himself, and the judgment for that evil, so that the world can emerge clean.. Think on that next time you see water.

2. Think of your own baptism into Christ - You are baptized into his death, burial and resurrection.

1. First, this means that just as the Father pronounced over Jesus - "You are mine, I love you and I am pleased with you." So God also speaks over all those who are baptized into Christ.
 1. This means then, in order to live the resurrection, newness of life that Jesus purchased for you - You must begin identifying yourself first and foremost as a beloved child of God. Identity must come before activity.
 1. *"Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. This is the true self. Every other identity is illusion."* –Brennan Manning
 2. Anything that comes into competition with this identity is a lie and imposter - it is a lying voice trying to get you to doubt your Abba - your father who loves you, created you, redeemed you, and wants to radically bless you and make you a blessing.
2. **Walk in the newness of Life - Resurrection life.** What if you used water as a daily liturgy ? - to bring you each day to that recommitment and rededication - I have died with Christ, been buried with him and raised with him in order to live the new life, resurrection life in Jesus.

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