



Summer Family Reunion

Today we kick off the Family Reunion. If you are new to our church, we do this every year. We kick off with baptism. We can't think of a better way to start a family reunion than welcoming people into the family.

Last week, we know of at least 40 people who made decisions for Christ, who came forward. But we know many of you raised a hand or stood but did not come forward.

Today, as we kind of put the message earlier in the gathering so that at the end, we are going to worship again, we're going to invite people to the water. We're going to invite those who came today with no plans to be baptized to be baptized.

If you've made a decision for "Christ and you've never been baptized, we're just simply calling it today. This is the day. If you're like, *when should I do it*. It's today, don't delay, don't wait until you're ready. I can't think of a better time.

I love listening to John Piper out of Minnesota and I had to have Amy listen to this... even just the prayer.

He started a message this week. I think it is from a decade or so ago, but the one I was listening to started and this is how he started his prayer.

He said, “Father... And he is super sincere. This isn’t a joke, but the shock of this opening statement he said, “Father, in just a little while, we’re all going to be dead.” I just paused right there and I’m like I know I’m not supposed to chuckle at that moment, but that is truth, boldly proclaimed. He’s saying life is short, he’s speaking of the brevity of life. We are not here very long. And I would just suggest to you any time a pastor reminds you that you’re not going to be here very long, you should listen to what he says next. And that’s exactly what Pastor Piper was helping us with in that message. It was on baptism. He did a message on baptism. He said, “Baptism is a glorious display of the gospel. If you know Pastor Piper, you know he loves that word *glorious*.

It’s a picture of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on display for believers, and the world to see of the decision that you’ve made for Christ. I’m doing a shorter sermon today to prepare us for our baptism in just a moment, but let me tell you the real sermon today is when you step into the water and you declare your new life in Christ... its what we say when you step into the water. You know you’re buried in the likeness of his death and raised in newness of life. It’s this beautiful picture. It’s not some religious formality; it’s not just a box you check after you get saved. It’s a beautiful picture of what Christ has done for you. You’re not receiving it just for yourself, it is you in union with Christ as we are going to see today,

When you step into the water, you are announcing *I have moved from death to life*. And I think that is what hit me. I’ve seen this word I don’t know how many times, but it’s been the echo in my life for the past week since Nasser spoke last week. With that word *behold*. And the way he said it and the way the passage... I’ve read that Second Corinthians 5: 17 I don’t know how many times in my life, but when you go from the old man to the new man, it’s really something to behold.

I remember in our first ministry assignment 30 years ago in South Georgia, one of the foulest mouth, vulgar individuals in town came to Christ and it was something to behold. He became a meek, gentle kind guy. Every time we would be around him, it was almost a moment of "no way." You've heard it said before. There are going to be people in heaven that you are going to be surprised to see. There are going to be people that see you and are equally surprised. But it's not by your works, but it's by what he has done that we can move from death to life. The old man to the new life.

I remember a year or two after we started the church, there was a gentleman in this town well known in this town, an older gentleman who came to know the Lord on his deathbed and for those of you who are like, "That's not how it works." I'm here to tell you that's exactly how it works. You can give your life to Jesus at the very end. If you are questioning that, I want you to go home today and read Mathew :20, the parable of the workers in the vineyard. It's this beautiful picture of some people work 12 hours... they worked a full day. Others only worked the last part of the day, the last hour and at the end of the day, when they were gathered to be paid, they were all paid the same amount.

That's not a story for Democrats, okay? It's not a story for republicans. It has nothing to do with politics. It has everything to do about the kingdom of God and how grace works in the Kingdom of God. How does grace work in the Kingdom of God? You can serve your whole life, you can get saved at an early age and serve your whole life for Christ. You can get saved at the very end and guess what? We'll see you both in Heaven. You both will be with the Lord and this gentleman came to know the Lord at the very end.

I only knew him from his deathbed, so that was kind of the perspective I preached his funeral. it was a graveside funeral and there were

probably 50 people. As I'm preaching about this guy and sharing stories about him, I see people start talking to each other out in the crowd. They're like, oh, no, who's going to tell him? He's at the wrong funeral." He should be at that tent over there. Why is he right here? He's not talking about the guy I knew. I kind of picked up on that, that something was going on, so I finally paused and I go, "You think I'm talking about a different guy and guess what? I am. I'm talking about a new man, man many of you didn't get to meet. You only knew the old guy who was nothing special, but he gave his life to Jesus. He punched the clock with seconds left on the clock, and he became a new person.

Today is the day for you to declare you're new faith in Jesus. Step into the water. Tell people, "I am a follower of Jesus. I am making this announcement, this outward proclamation of an inward decision that I have made."

So, what I want to do is give you four reasons why those in the room and across campus should be baptized if you are a believer who has never been baptized after your salvation, why today is the day. I want to start with number one. Jesus commanded it. He commanded us to baptize.

We read in Mathew 28: 19 and 20, ***therefore go and make disciples***. This is what we are called to do.

How do you make a disciple?

Jesus is going to start off with two very clear action steps for us to take.

It starts with Making disciples of all nations. – baptize them. When they get saved, baptize them. They need to be baptized in the water and then after that, teach them. We are going to baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy spirit. For those who

stepped forward today, you always see us asking questions. When I'm baptizing, I like to ask the question, "Do you believe Jesus is the son of God? This is like an exit row seat on an airplane. I need an audible yes. And the bolder the proclamation, the better. Do you believe Jesus is the son of God? – yes. Do you believe he lived a sinless life and died on the cross for your sins? Yes. Do you believe he was raised from the dead? Yes. Have you repented of your sins and trusted him as your Lord and Savior. – Yes.

And with that, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy spirit.

What do you do after that? Then it says teach them. So, these are the two things you want to do. If you want to make disciples, if you want to be a church that is about making disciples. If you want to be a church that's about making disciples, baptize them and teach them. Teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

Now here's the promise that comes underneath our calling, the great commission, what we are supposed to be about. Jesus says, "And surely, I am with you always. That's the promise. How long is he with us? To the very end of the age.

So, how long should we be about making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them? Until the very end of the age. And we are going to continue to do this. Making disciples, baptizing people, Jesus commanded it.

Number 2. Baptism is an immediate first step of obedience for new believers. Today I want all of you who place faith in Jesus and have never been baptized to really, through the scripture, see the sense of urgency that we have.

When we read the book of Acts, it's repent, believe, be baptized. There is an urgency and it all takes place. Look at what it says. Those who believed and remember... be really clear here. The gospel has always been about Faith alone in Christ alone. Salvation is my faith alone in Christ alone ***so those who believed were baptized and about 3,000 were added to their number that day.***

Now you are seeing people get up and move toward the prayer room, you're seeing people move toward the breezeway over here. This is the time I want to call all of you who have signed up for baptism to make your way to prepare to be baptized. And I'm going to give several more prompts for those who have not signed up. But it's today. They were baptized that day. You get this sense of urgency all throughout the book of Acts, but I want to be really clear about something. We are going to see it here and in Romans. *Salvation is required for baptism, but baptism is not required for salvation.*

I want us to be very clear at this church. the gospel has always been, always will be by grace through faith plus nothing, Minus nothing.

We believe this is an immediate first step. The sense of urgency should be placed upon it after you are saved. This is immediate first steps.

What I want to do with those who have stepped up, that's the first prompting.

Number 3 – Jesus modeled baptism for us. So, he commanded it, it's an immediate first step, and Jesus himself was baptized and he gives us the how to be baptized as well.

In Mark 1: 19 and 10 we read. ***At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordon.*** Here's the how – Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water... this is why we fully -

immerse people under the water. It's because it was modeled by Jesus. He says heaven being torn open and the spirit descending on him like a dove.

Why do we immerse people under the water completely? One, it follows the example of Jesus. He came up out of the water. Two, it represents the believer's death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. It represents the death to the old self and being raised in newness of life to Christ. Buried with him in the likeness of his death, raised to walk in newness of life.

So, my encouragement to you today... And we will see it in a second. There are a lot of questions people have about this. When should I be baptized? How should I be baptized? It's been debated for centuries. Should I be baptized? how much water? should be used has always been debated, we here at this church immerse for those reasons. Jesus modeled it. And the fourth reason, the final reason. Baptism declares your faith to others. This is the sermon today. We are hoping for many that are going to step out for the very first time.

Romans 6: 4 says, ***we were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that we ,must as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father, we too may live a new life.***

Now keep this in mind... when people sometimes read this they think baptism and salvation go together. Baptism is required is required for salvation but keep it in the backdrop of Romans. The entire book of Romans, if you read it from the first chapter to the last chapter, you are going to get that justification, that being saved is being justified by faith alone.

Paul goes over and over again. Faith alone in Christ alone is your salvation.

So, the clear point here is that we are buried with him through baptism. It's this picture of the gospel and today, you are the sermon. We are going to encourage you to take this step.

So, I want to answer a few questions that people have up to this point. We hear them often. Every time we do baptism and we do the interviews and we talk to people. I want to be really clear about this because when we do spontaneous baptisms, we don't get the sit-down conversations. So, you are probably going to see the difference today between the baptism that was scheduled and a baptism that is spontaneous because we will probably spend a little more time talking in the baptismal pool to the one who is coming forward who had no plans on this today.

You're like, Can you just give me the practical... how do I go home dry?

Let me explain this to you quickly. If you step forward today, this day to be baptized, you will go home dry because we are going to give you shorts, a shirt. You'll have a towel; you'll be able to leave dry. That's not the biggest question that's not the biggest question that's always asked, but this is one of them that we get asked often.

"I was sprinkled as a child or as a baby, should I be baptized as an adult?" The answer is yes. You should be baptized as a believer. You didn't make a decision for Christ as a child. Just to be clear, the decisions of infant baptism began hundreds of years after Jesus was baptized and the apostles taught or preached about baptism. It began in the late second century. This is different from what we do with baby dedication. We do baby dedication here a couple of times a year. We often say it's more about dedicating the parents than it is the child because we bring the parents up and the parents are committing to raising this child to bring this child up in the training and instruction of

the Lord. And then we stand as a church family and say we support this. We stretch out our hands and we say we are going to walk alongside you and be an echo in the life of your child. In other words, Mom and Dad, we want you to take personal responsibility for raising your child in the faith and we are going to be an additional voice in that.

So, we do baby dedication. We don't do infant baptism because we believe the bible teaches clearly that this is that immediate step after salvation.

So, some of you were baptized as children, you've never been baptized after you made a decision to follow Jesus. I'm here to tell you today is the day. It's the day for you to be baptized.

This takes us to the next question – “What if my parents disapprove of my baptism?” If I get baptized, my mom and dad, baptized me in the church when I was a baby and if I get baptized, they are going to struggle with this.

We've had Muslims get saved in our church and this is one of the areas they hold back on. They're like “when I go this public with my faith, my mom and Dad will disown me. or, at the very least, they are going to struggle with this and think I'm dishonoring them.”

I want to remind you... and Jesus couldn't be more clear in Mathew 10. When you make a decision to follow Jesus, he gets your undivided allegiance. He is your priority relationship. And in Mathew 10, he spells it out clearly. He says, “Don't think that I've come to bring peace, I've come to bring a sword. And what's going to happen is when you place faith in me and I have your undivided allegiance; you are going to have family and friends that go the other way.

And for many of you, it's going to happen within your very home. That's why we read in Mathew 10: 36 and 37. A Man enemies will be members of his own household. This doesn't mean we go pick fights. It just means we live our life for Jesus. We do what he commands us to do. We do what he tells us to do. Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded. Living that way will separate households.

Anyone who loves their father or Mother more than me is not worthy of my. Anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Some of the strongest, but clearest teachings of Jesus. That he is our priority relationship.

So, I would encourage you... if you've been holding back on baptism, today, I want you to step into the water so you can say to your parents, I want to be baptized to point you to Jesus. I want you to know what he did in my life and I know he can do it in your life.

David Nassar was here last week. He shared his testimony years ago with us. You can find it online, but you'll know David was the first one in his family to come to Christ. He has a powerful testimony of his Dad letting him go to church because this church served his dad's restaurant and just crazy hospital ways and it just opened the door for David to go and David was a hellion as a teenager. He came to Christ and then just one by one his family came to Christ. Again, today, you are the sermon for your family. You get to declare your faith boldly declare it.

So, at this time, I want to invite those who believed in Jesus, you've repented, you've believed, and this is your next step. I want you to get up right now here, out in the courtyard, the patio, over at the chapel, anywhere you're sitting outside, in the foyer. You've had fear of what your parents will think, I want you to step out right now be bold, take this step. Don't wait, don't delay.

When a person repents of their sin, turns their lives around to follow Jesus, there's a desire to do what he commands. To follow Jesus is to do what he says and the first step of that is obedience after salvation, the step of obedience and baptism.

So, scripture clearly teaches that once we are saved by faith alone not by works, that this is the first outpouring of our faith and of our declaration.

Another question that people ask is, "I don't know if I'm ready so should I wait until I'm ready?"

Let me tell you. you are not going to find any verse in the bible that's even close to something like this, speaking of baptism.

Those who believed took a membership class, wrote out their testimony, met with an elder, scheduled their baptism months out. They invited family and friends and when they felt ready, then they were baptized... no. They were saved and baptized. They believed and were baptized.

Please let this sink in here. The only biblical condition for baptism is belief, not spiritual maturity. And this is what holds people back. they're like, "Last week I stood when David Nasser gave that invitation. I stood, I know I gave my life to Christ. I just need to wait a little bit to see if it sticks"

No, spiritual maturity... What did Jesus just teach us in the very first test we looked at today? Baptize them, then teach them. So, be baptized and we will teach you but we never want what we teach you, the commands of Jesus, for you to think for a moment, that is your salvation. That is the overflow of your salvation. That is your desire to

please him. That is your desire to walk with him. That is your desire to do what he says and it starts by being baptized.

So, I'll make another plea for those here in the chapel, don't wait.

So, today, the invitation is simple. Just right where you're at, stand and head to be baptized. When you get baptized, you are pointing to Jesus and saying, he died for me and he died for you. He saved me, he can save you. He changed my life, he can change yours.

How many times have you been in this church and in ... I've seen it the people step in the water and there are people in our congregation going no way!"

Let's baptize then we will teach. Amen

Now, for those who haven't taken the step of repentance and believe you've not taken that step. I'm going to ask heads to be bowed and eyes to be closed, I'm going to give you a moment because talk about immediate, for some, today is the day of your salvation and you are going to be saved and baptized within minutes of those today.

So, today I ask you the question with your head bowed. Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? if you say yes, answer the next question.

Do you believe he lived a sinless life and died on the cross for you, you can answer that with a Yes, answer this next question. Do you believe he rose from the dead? If you answer yes to that, move on to this next question. Have you repented of your sins of the old way of life and you want the new life and you are now confessing Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that he has been raised from the dead that you will be saved? Today, if you make that decision, I'm going to invite you to stand up right where you are, you've given your life to Christ and today

in this moment right now, is the moment of your baptism that you would step out, head to the prayer room, head to the breezeway.

I ask our church family, as we enter into this time of worship, you know what to do when someone comes up out of the water. The newness of life in Christ, we celebrate that as a church. so, we are going to worship, we are going to celebrate.