

## **COME ON IN, THE WATER IS FINE**

In Geddes Char and I on warm afternoons in the summer, would often take Jess and friends Jodi and Jenny up to the Platte swimming pool.

Jess and Jenny couldn't wait to get in the water. If the lifeguard wasn't looking they would run, scream, and jump in the water.

Once in the water they would jump, bop up and down, and laugh and squeal with sheer delight. Eventually they would see Jodi and I and invite us to join them, "come on in, the water is fine."

Now, Jodi would be a bit hesitant, she would come to the edge of the pool, stick her toe in and quickly pull it back. Then she would step back a few steps and have to think about it.

She would eventually move a few steps to one side or the other looking for warmer waters, go to the water's edge, stick a toe in, pull it back, step back a few steps, and think about it some more.

This ritual was repeated again and again in hopes of finding warmer waters.

I felt very responsible for her, you know. I didn't want her to be alone. I didn't want her to have some kind of traumatizing experience in that frigid water and so I too, often participated in the water toe tap.

Sometimes when I go swimming I just say a quick prayer and jump in just to get it over with. But there were many days I would wait patiently on the deck, praying long and hard, finally put fear in it's place, and eventually accept the invitation to "come on in the water is fine." I take the plunge and you know what? The water is usually fine.

Jesus via the Holy Spirit invites us into the Baptismal waters of life and death.

He in essence says, "Come on in, the water is fine."  
Maybe he means "it will be fine."

I had read somewhere that there was this village. A plague spread through the village. If something wasn't done, all in the village would die.

A missionary came. He said there was help. He said there were medicines that would help. They were on the other side of the river. All they had to do was cross the river. He invited them to come across the river.

The people feared the river. They believed they would die if they went in the river. There were monsters in the river. There were monsters and there was death.

The people didn't trust the missionary. They didn't believe him.

The missionary went and stood ankle deep in the water and said, "Come on in the water is fine" They didn't believe him.

He went out to his waist and began splashing water. He tried to splash them, they jumped back in fear. He said, "See it won't hurt you, come on in, the water is fine." They still didn't believe him, they didn't trust him.

He dived into the water and disappeared, the people were horrified, and they felt their fears justified.

Just then he came out of the water on the other side and said, "Come on in, the water is fine." They followed the missionary. They jumped in, swam to the other side, got out of the water, and found help.

Faith finally conquered the fear of the village people. They accepted the invitation, got into the water, and followed the missionary.

Again Jesus invites into the waters of death...eventually to be healed for life.

He has gone through it and says to us, "Come on in the water is fine."

We're going to talk about baptism as an invitation today, an invitation from God.

I want to talk about Baptism as an invitation to die and an invitation to live.

I want to talk about Baptism as an invitation to live in a different way, God's way.

I want to talk about Baptism as an invitation to be part of a family.

First, I want to talk about Baptism as being a symbol of death, death by drowning...**BAPTISM IS AN INVITATION TO DIE**, to die to self. Jesus invites us to die to self. He did.

When there is a baptism we get pretty excited, especially if we're baptizing a baby. We get him or her all dressed up. Oh, they look so cute. We ooou and ahhh. Eldon and just I hope they don't cry so we look good. It's a joyous occasion, it's a happy time, as well it should be.

On the other hand Baptism is actually a death, did you know that? Maybe crying would be more appropriate...it tells us someone is in pain.

One pastor pointed out that we think...

That baptism will solve all our problems...

In reality Baptism it could mark the beginning of problems

We think that baptism is the fulfillment of our human expectations.

In reality Baptism is the destruction of self-fulfillment.

We think that we're nice people so baptism is a way to help nice people be nice.

In reality Baptism is the way to deal with our not so nice ness.

So maybe when we hear,

"come on in the water is fine", in some ways, doesn't feel quite so fine.

Second, **BAPTISM IS NOT ONLY AN INVITATION TO DIE but to LIVE**

In Colossians 2.13 Paul mentions this death, "*having been buried with him in baptism...*" buried with him...him is Jesus, we know he died, we put ourselves in him and we die too, but if we accept his love and forgiveness then, *then we are raised with him*...we were dead in our sin and God makes us alive in Christ.

OK, again, here is the picture. You give up your selfishness and put your trust in God. You put your sins on the cross and accept Jesus and his forgiveness.

That puts you in Christ. He goes into the baptismal waters of death and dies. He goes and because he goes you go too. Then he comes out of those waters and because he comes out of the water, then you do too. Then when he is raised to new life, you are raised to a new life.

Let's me illustrate with a couple of Bible stories...

What can you tell me about Noah and the ark...and in Genesis 7.23 it says, *“Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out. Men and animals and creatures that move along the ground and birds of the air were wiped out of the earth. Only Noah was left and those in the ark with him.”*

This is in many ways a very tragic and traumatic story. It's ugly, think about all the death and destruction. We've cleaned it up a bit and made it a cutsie story. There are all the animals and so we think it makes a good children's story.

And then there is old Jonah, what can you tell me about Jonah? He was the real red necked prophet. Pastor Don is really a red-neck prophet and he likes to admit it too.

Now, in Chapter 2 of the book of Jonah, he is drowning, he says, *“The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me. Seaweed was wrapped around my head.”*

What saved Noah from the flood waters of death? He did what God asked, he built and then went into in the ark. Noah was saved by the ark. What saved Jonah from drowning on the ocean floor? He prayed and then God sent the whale to save him. Jonah was saved by the whale.

The ark protected and saved Noah and his family...The whale protected and saved Jonah and it is Jesus who protects and saves us from death and saves us for live.

Third, **BAPTISM IS NOT ONLY AN INVITATION TO FOR LIFE AND DEATH but AN INVITATION TO A CHANGED LIFE.**

God don't make no junk.

God loves us just as we are...and God loves us too much to leave us that way.

Baptism means to be immersed, completely covered. Our lives are totally covered by Christ to be changed by Christ.

Paul tells us something about this change in Chapter 3 of Colossians, ***Since, then, you have been raised with Christ...Set your mind on the things above, not earthly things.***

He goes on to say in verse 5-***Put to death, therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature; sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, which is idolatry. Because of this the wrath of God is coming.***

***7-You used to***(there is a change) ***walk in these ways, in the life you once lived***(something has changed). ***But now you must rid yourself of all these things such as; anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.***

***9-Do not lie to each other since you have taken off your old self with it's practices and put on the new self***(again something has changed) ***which is being renewed***(changed) ***in the knowledge in the image***(we're recovering our God given image. It has fallen because of sin.) ***of the Creator.***

Paul is saying get rid of all that stuff, let that stuff die. God is working in you and the Spirit will help. It is a difficult thing to do but it is the right thing to do.

I read where the great Roman Emperor, Constantine, the emperor who declared Christianity the state religion of the empire, kept his right arm out of the baptismal waters. He and his soldiers left his right arm, sword arm, symbolic arm of power out of the baptismal waters.

Now why would he do that? I guess he didn't want his power to come under the authority and Lordship of Jesus.

When you think about it, some of us do that as well. We might not surrender our pride, a bad relationship, an attitude about something or someone, a bad habit, our pocketbooks or wallets, our calendars, ipods, or cell phones.

Baptism says we give it all to Christ, surrender it to him.

I don't know about you but for me that has been a process...a loooooong process. The way I use to talk and the way I think are different now. Those changes came over time.

God is at work in us and we are partners in that in that remodeling of our lives. Here is what he wants us to do, verse 12, ***“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.***

The last thing I want to say about Baptism today is that, **BAPTISM IS AN INVITATION AND INITIATION INTO COMMUNITY**...A new family.

It's a family you choose. And with that choice...as with any family comes privileges and responsibilities.

Verses 15-17, ***“Let the peace of Christ rule your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.***

We're in relationship, not because I say so, but because wants us in relationship.

When we're in the body of Christ, we're the church. We can't just think, I'll come and go as I please, it doesn't matter if I give or don't give, serve or don't serve...I'll just do as I please.

God has invited you to be part of the body of Christ and in Baptism we recognize your worth and work.

We have some people here today who have heard and accepted God's invitation today.

They may find the water fine and sometimes not so fine, painful or not, I promise they'll find a new life, a changed life, and a community that loves them, cares and challenges them.

So, come on in, the water will be fine.

