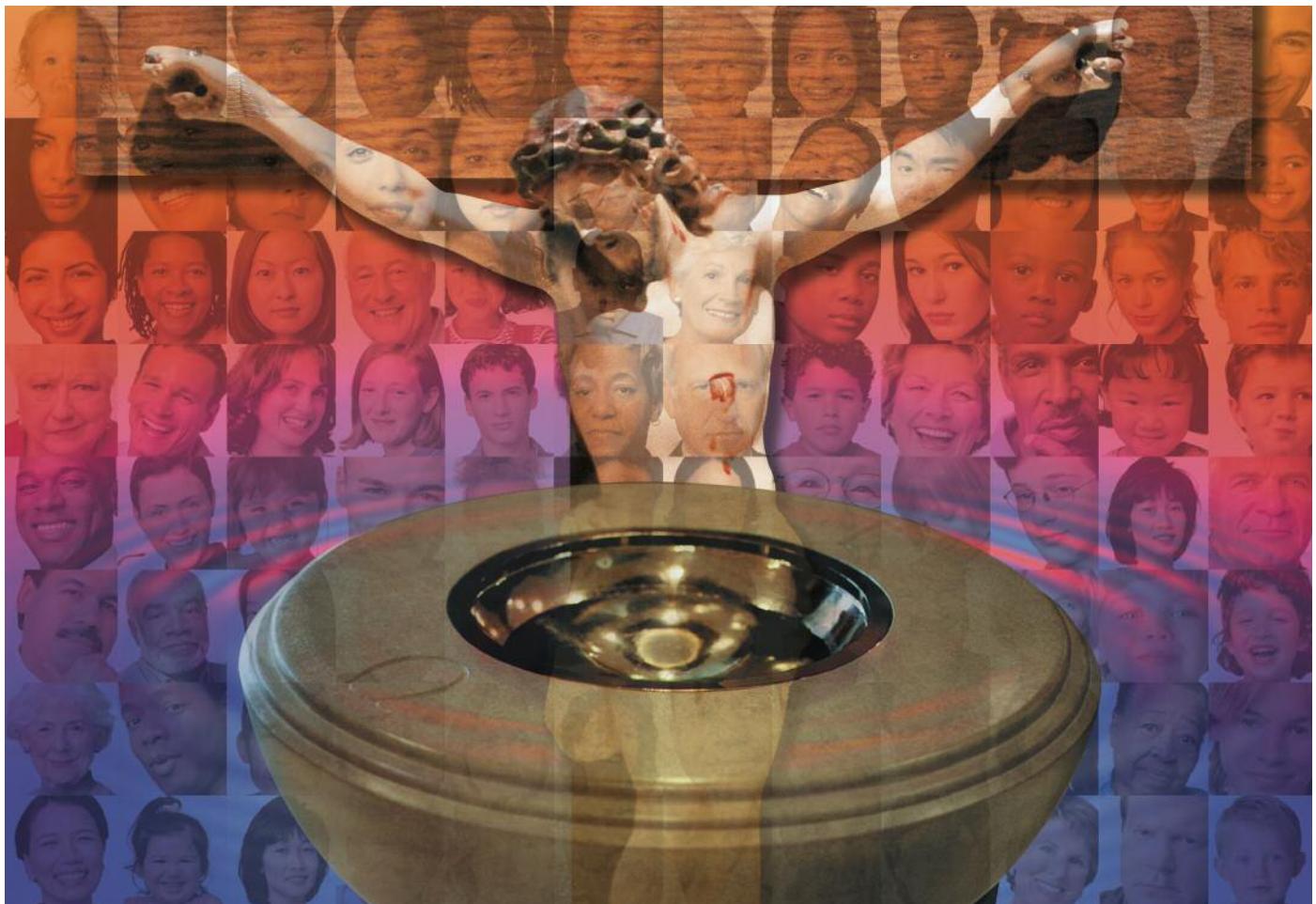


For the

LIFE of the WORLD

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Our True Identity - p.4

Baptism—Past, Present, and Future Tense - p.7

Baptism in the Public Square - p.10

In the Field - p.14



CONTENTS



For the LIFE of the WORLD

PRESIDENT
Rev. Dr. Dean O. Wenthe

PUBLISHER
Rev. Scott Klemesz

EDITOR
Rev. John T. Pless

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Monica Robins

ART DIRECTOR
Steve Blakey

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FEATURES

4 Our True Identity

By the Rev. Herbert C. Mueller Jr., President of the Southern Illinois District, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

In Baptism, God gives us our true identity, our real life, our Christian vocation, our daily bath, and our eternal destiny. In essence, these gifts of God are each found in Christ, given when we are buried with Christ in His death and raised with Him in His resurrection (in Baptism). Jesus shapes our identity, gives us our real life, calls us to a life of service, daily cleanses us, and assures us we are His forever.

7 Baptism—Past, Present, and Future Tense

By the Rev. Dr. David P. Scaer, Professor and Chairman of Systematic Theology, Holder of the David P. Scaer Chair of Systematic and Biblical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary

The New Testament knows of only one Baptism that can be administered only once. This one-time act continues to offer the blessings of salvation, even when those baptized no longer have faith. Without faith, these blessings cannot be received, but they are still there. Since Baptism is an act of the Triune God who is present in the water, this Sacrament remains the firm foundation to which all who are baptized can return to find salvation. It creates, confirms, and works through faith, but it does not depend on it.

10 Baptism in the Public Square

By Jennifer L. Hamer, Member of Christ the King Lutheran Church, Riverview, Fla., and Teacher at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Brandon, Fla.

Is Baptism necessary? In conversations with friends or family members, I am sure we have all encountered statements such as "I am going to let my child decide if he wants to be baptized" or "I believe in God; I do not need baptism." Baptism is God's seal on this child for all of eternity, never to be outgrown or cast aside. Baptism is not dependent on the knowledge or emotions of the child, nor the child's ability to make a decision. Nor is it necessary in the case of infants for faith to precede baptism. It is enough that the parents answer on behalf of the child.

14 In the Field

By Monica Robins

Featuring the Rev. David M. Young, Pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church, Eyota, Minn.

By most medical counts, I should not exist. I should not be alive. My mother experienced severe complications with my older sister's birth, rendering her unable to have more children. Six years later, my mother was instructed to undergo cat scans in the hope of determining the cause of the severe migraines plaguing her daily. The primary concern was a brain tumor. She underwent other uniform tests, including having blood drawn, and was informed that she did indeed have a tumor, but not in the brain. I was born six months later and some would argue that I have been a headache ever since. It was with great joy that my parents witnessed my Baptism a month later.

My thirtieth birthday looms in the near future, bringing both Law and Gospel: Law because the sinner in me is tempted to begin counting backwards; Gospel because I have lived in that baptismal grace for thirty years and see no end of God's gifts in sight.

Baptism: A Christian Birth

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19) *"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."* (Mark 16:16)

Is Baptism necessary? In conversations with friends or family members, I am sure we have all encountered statements such as "I am going to let my child decide if he wants to be baptized," or "I believe in God; I do not need Baptism." It is customary to give gifts to parents blessed with the birth of their new son or daughter. How often do parents turn to their newborn infant and ask if the gift is pleasing to them, if the color of the pajamas is acceptable, or if the toy has a comforting tune to play every time it is squeezed. These questions seem ridiculous, yet as sinful people we impose such questions on our Baptism. The parents receive these earthly and perishable tokens on behalf of their infant, taking great joy in dressing their child in all of the new clothes while they still fit.



Baptism in the

How much more important is this gift of Baptism, which covers the infant in Christ's robe of righteousness! Baptism is God's seal on this child for all of eternity, never to be outgrown or cast aside. Baptism is not dependent on the knowledge or emotions of the child, nor the child's ability to make a decision. Nor is it necessary in the case of infants for faith to precede Baptism. It is enough that the parents answer on behalf of the child. *"He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."* (Titus 3:5-8)

Is Baptism Law or Gospel? In good Lutheran fashion, we answer, "Yes!" *"Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word."* (Luther's Small Catechism) God's command and promise are given to us in Baptism. For those who despise God's Word, it is Law. For those who cling to the cross, it is purest Gospel. Who are these individuals who deny the need for Baptism and despise the Word of God and the manner in which He delivers His grace? Who are these individuals who cling to the cross of Christ and say with great peace "Lord have Mercy"? Again, in fine Lutheran fashion, we may say that all of us fall into both categories of the questions asked.

Sanctification: A Christian Life

When we were baptized, we received the righteousness of Christ (New Adam), but the Old Adam swims quite well! We received forgiveness of sins and life eternal, however, we continue to sin and fall short of the glory of God. We were justified and sanctified, yet we daily and willfully separate ourselves from the love of God in Christ.

What is the role of Baptism in our daily lives? Does Baptism have purpose or meaning here and now? Baptism is not just a one time, past event. We revisit our Baptism every time we partake of the rest of the gifts promised in Scripture and given in the Divine Service. Because we daily struggle with the saint/sinner dichoto-

my, we daily need washing and renewal. We are 100% saint and 100% sinner, trapped in a spiritual tension that will not end until our fleshly demise. The Apostle Paul understood this very well when he spoke of this struggle in Romans 7:13-25. So then, what is our approach to sanctification? Is it our duty to live a life reflecting Christ's love and sacrifice or is it Christ in action in us? The answer is yes!

The entire sanctified life is one of daily dying and living: *"We were therefore buried with Him through Baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life"* (Romans 6:4). We continually partake of Word and Sacrament, repent of our sins, and receive forgiveness as we daily crucify our sinful nature. Sanctification is best understood as Christ in action according to our new nature, not our pathetic obligation to prove we are sanctified. What we do or say in our daily vocations is not driven by Law ("We must do this or accomplish that if we are truly sanctified"), but by the redeeming blood of Christ who continues to abide with us. Sanctification (Christ in action) is enlightened in John 15:4-5: *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing."*

Yet we as sinners try to pick and choose which gifts of God we wish to receive. We have set before us in the Divine Service (God's work for us) a beautiful treasure chest constructed from the wood of the manger and the cross wherein we have God's word in liturgy (corporate/public service): Baptism, confession, preaching, hymns, and the Lord's Supper. And woe to us when we let our sinful nature say "I will take this gift, but not that!" or "I deem this gift important, but certainly not



Is Baptism necessary? In conversations with friends or family members, I am sure we have all encountered statements such as "I am going to let my child decide if he wants to be baptized," or "I believe in God; I do not need Baptism."

Public Square

By Jennifer Hamer

that!" or worse yet "I will take this gift, but let me alter it more to my personal liking." We would never pick and choose which diamonds, emeralds, and sapphires to take when the entire treasure chest is given to us. Woe to our fickle, sinful nature! We poor sinners have naught to do but stand in the presence of God and receive His gifts. We live the rest of the week in our vocations rejoicing in the forgiveness and grace bestowed on us, reflecting His light and mercy. The sanctified life does not consist of our personal decisions regarding which gifts we choose or what actions we deem pleasing according to our

sinful nature. Instead, "the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever" (Luther's Small Catechism). We rejoice in our baptismal grace, which extends from the beginning of life until death, every time we partake of the Gospel in the Word and Sacraments.

Mrs. Jennifer L. Hamer is a member of Christ the King Lutheran Church, Riverview, Fla., and a teacher at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Brandon, Fla.



In the baptismal rite of Medieval England, the baptismal candle was placed in the right hand of the baptizan with the admonition to live always by the light of Christ. When Baptism reached its consummation in eternal life, the same candle was placed in the right hand of the deceased, signifying that Baptism encompassed the entire life of the believer—a life of baptismal grace in the public square; a life of daily dying and rising; in short, a life of Christ in action for us and for our salvation.

All who believe and are baptized Shall see the Lord's salvation;
Baptized into the death of Christ, They are a new creation;
Through Christ's redemption they will stand Among the glorious heav'nly band
Of ev'ry tribe and nation.

With one accord, O God, we pray, Grant us your Holy Spirit;
Help us in our infirmity Through Jesus' blood and merit;
Grant us to grow in grace each day By holy Baptism that we may
Eternal life inherit. (LW #225, stz. 1-2)

What is the role of Baptism in our daily lives? Does Baptism have purpose or meaning here and now? Baptism is not just a one time, past event. We revisit our Baptism every time we partake of the rest of the gifts promised in Scripture and given in the Divine Service. Because we daily struggle with the saint/sinner dichotomy, we daily need washing and renewal.
