



The Federated Church of Hyannis

Weekly Message from the Pastor and Sermon Notes for June 5, 2022

Scripture: Acts 2:37-41

Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God." Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"

Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

Message: "Be Baptized and Then You Will Receive the Holy Spirit"

Jesus gave a lot of instruction and lessons to his disciples. Jesus only gave two commandments to his disciples. One is to be baptized, the other to break bread and drink the cup in remembrance of him. We call these two commandments sacraments, Baptism and Communion. They are the means by which we are forgiven, transformed, and reborn.

In John chapter 3 Jesus speaks with a teacher of the law named Nicodemus. In verse 5 Jesus explains to Nicodemus no one can enter the kingdom of heaven unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Nicodemus is confused by Jesus' answer and does not know how one can be born again in old age. But Jesus insists that one must be born again. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the spirit gives birth to spirit.

Baptism is an important part of the faith formation journey. In today's passage from Acts 2 Peter gives a compelling case that to receive the Holy Spirit one must repent and be baptized first.

There is a theology behind why Peter says this. First is that God is holy. The Holy Spirit only dwells within those who have repented and have been baptized. To receive the Holy Spirit, one must repent and be baptized so as to be purified from sin, then the Holy Spirit can be received. Sin is like cancer; it attacks what is good and healthy that sustains life. If the Holy Spirit was to dwell within us

without the removal of sin, it would be a draining battle of opposing forces. It would not produce peace; it would only intensify the internal conflict between that which is sinful and that which is holy. The mixture of the two would be like lukewarm water. And Jesus said such water is vomited out. Jesus says be hot or cold, but not a mixture of both.

When Peter preached his compelling case to the crowds on Pentecost, they accepted what he said. They repented, were baptized, and 3000 were added to the church at that time.

Unfortunately, among present generations who look at Christianity with skepticism, baptism is believed by many to be unnecessary. God loves us no matter what, so why should some ceremonial ritual be done? I would say because Jesus asked his disciples to be baptized, it is part of recognizing Jesus as Lord and Savior. Refusal to submit to the request of Jesus to be baptized is refusal to accept Jesus as Lord. Baptism is a simple way of trusting and obeying Jesus. The second part is that through baptism one is able to receive the Holy Spirit. Without being born of the spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God. It is a choice to receive the Holy Spirit, God does not force the Holy Spirit on those who do not choose to receive the Holy Spirit. The decision to follow Jesus is a choice. The decision to receive the Holy Spirit is a choice. Being baptized is a choice. Baptism is not a ceremonial ritual; it is about making a choice.

Here at The Federated Church, we offer baptism to both adults and children. Adults are asked to make a confession of faith when they are baptized. Infants are unable to speak the words, but we make a promise to them if they are baptized that we the church will teach them the lessons of Jesus and guide them so when they are old enough they can make the confession of faith. This is usually done at the time of Confirmation, but the confession can be made at any point in their life. We recognize that baptism is the first step on that journey, and that once a person is baptized they are able to receive the Holy Spirit.

Today is Pentecost Sunday in the liturgical calendar of the Church. It is recognized as the Church official beginning of the Church. Those original 3000 that were baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit became the Church. And since that time the Church has always been a body of baptized believers who have made the choice to receive Jesus into their lives. It is the Holy Spirit who guides, moves, and directs the Church today. Every time we take communion or participate in a baptism is a reaffirmation that we choose to follow Jesus. We do these things because they are what he asked of those who would follow him.

If you or someone you know would like to be baptized let the church office know so it can be coordinated.