INTRO. Two events in my life – in many ways – remain as real to me today as the day they actually occurred:

The first occurred on September 7, 1988. I was seven years old. My father was baptizing me at Second Baptist Church in Warner Robins, Georgia, shortly after I trusted in Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior.

- I was not baptized because I was young.
- I was not baptized because my father was a minister.

I was being baptized because I trusted in Christ as my Savior, and my church taught me this is the first step of obedience in following Christ.

- I was eager to do so.
- I didn’t know there was another way.

The second picture was on July 11, 1999, at the same church in Warner Robins. I was 17 years old. I am pictured with my grandfather, Tom Maloy, who was age 65 at the time. Interestingly enough, I had just become a pastor – and my grandfather was the first person I ever actually baptized.

- He was not baptized because I was going into the ministry.
- He was not baptized because he was a retired Marine (a veteran).

He was baptized because he trusted Christ as his Savior!

Transition: these two pictures tell a lot. Who can be baptized? Who needs to be baptized?

1. Little children, young people, who have committed their lives to Christ – after they are saved, they need to immediately be baptized (It’s not too soon).

2. And grown men who have been successful, run businesses, been to war and served our country – they also need to be baptized (It’s not too late).

3. Young people…older people…and everyone in between.

4. IF you have trusted in Christ…once you have…it’s time to be baptized! (Obey Christ now.)

Question: What is Baptism?
Answer: Baptism is the public profession of God’s saving work in the life of a believer. It is the ultimate picture of uniting with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
Baptism is a picture of the gospel for all to see…it is the external celebration of the internal transformation of the heart.

**FACT**: the action of baptism is extremely simple…but it is pregnant with meaning/symbolism. (It’s just a ring/picture/diploma…but it means so much more!)

**First, Jesus publicly begins his ministry with the act of water baptism** *(Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10).*

*Matt 3* and *Mark 1* → John the Baptist was baptizing in the Jordan River.
- John the Baptist was preaching the nearness of God’s Kingdom.
- In other words, John the Baptist was saying: *It’s never been more necessary to make a decision for Christ than now…*
  - It was a conviction about urgency *(make this decision)*
  - It was a call to action *(take this action)*.

Q: Why would you ever make a decision about Christ that didn’t result in action?
- God’s decision to love you and save you resulted in His action *(Rom 5:8)*!

Your decision to trust him and follow Him must result in action!

**Lesson**: Bible teachers affirm that John the Baptist’s baptism was a sign of:
- A cleansing away of sin *(OT water purification)*.
- Also a picture of passing safely through the waters of judgment and death –
  - Noah’s Ark and Moses thru the Red Sea.

**Note**: at the Jordan River – even Jesus comes forward for baptism!
- Obviously, Jesus had never sinned.
- But Jesus begins his ministry by identifying with His people and taking on their sin!

He is modeling for us that obedience and submission to God is important.
- Baptism is all about obedience and submission.

Jesus’ baptism is Him 1) Coming to you AND 2) Showing you the way!

**Second, the New Testament Church began on the Day of Pentecost the following way**: The *Word was preached, they believed in Christ, and they were baptized* *(Acts 2:37-41)*. God’s Spirit was poured out in Jerusalem at Pentecost in a mighty way *(Acts 2)*. Peter preached…3,000 responded to Christ from many different nations/tongues.

Immediately the text indicates: *after responding, they were baptized.*

Preaching → Word enters our ears and touches the heart.
Baptism → Witness with our eyes, then moves to the heart.
**Bottom line:** the NT Pattern is this – once saved, immediately be baptized.

- It’s dangerous to “think about it” too much.

**Application:**

**First, how do we baptize?** We baptize at FBCW by full immersion (under) the water.

A. The NT word baptize = to submerge, to dip, to immerse.

   a. It does NOT mean to sprinkle.
   
   b. You can’t “come up out of the water” in a cup.

B. *Mark 1:10* ⇒ Jesus’ baptism was as a grown man. Primarily adults were coming!

   a. This is not a child’s christening, or a child’s dedication.


**Second, why do we fully immerse?** We fully immerse because it pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

A. *Rom 6:4*, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism unto death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

B. Note the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement! I need ALL my sins covered.

   (under the water…Christ was completely dead…I am completely dead to my sin).

C. God’s story in Jesus – death, burial, and resurrection…becomes my story!

   Sin killed me…sin put me away…Christ has raised me to new life!

**Third, who can be baptized?** Christian baptism is for anyone who has confessed Christ, repented of sin, and committed to follow the Lord.

A. Note, there is a BIG difference between baptism and family/baby dedication.

B. Baby dedication is wonderful –

   a. Parents opportunity to acknowledge God, their need of Him, and to cover the child in prayer and commitment.

C. But for ALL children – there still comes a moment in the child’s life when he/she must choose to follow Christ for themselves.

D. Common language we’ve used: *age of accountability*…*age or responsibility.*
These are very important points about baptism:

- Baptism is for confessing believers only.
  - The picture in the tank…is literally the overflow of the confession of the tongue!

- Baptism in the NT occurs *after* the believer gets saved.

- The water itself does NOT save.
  - Baptism is the picture.
  - (ILLUS: like the wedding ring)
  - Only the blood of Christ does the saving!

- We must balance this –
  - Baptism is not elevated as essential to salvation (we do not affirm baptism regeneration).
  - Baptism is portrayed as the first major step of obedience after salvation.

- Baptism is done in honor of the Trinity (*Matt* 28:19).

**Q:** So Pastor Jeremy, why should I be baptized?
**A:** To follow the example of Christ! Jesus humbly sought to identify with us and to model obedience for us…

- Primary reason to be baptized is to identify with Jesus! To obey Jesus!
- To not be baptized is to live in sin/rebellion against the Word of God.

**The two most important questions today –**

1) Have you ever been saved? Have you ever believed in **The Gospel**?

**What** is it? → The good news, Christ has come to save! (*Rom* 1:16).

**Why** do we need it? → The truth, we are sinners who can’t save ourselves! (*Rom* 3:10).

**Who** can receive it? → Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord… (*Rom* 10:13).

**When** can we receive it? → Now! Today is the day of salvation (*2 Cor* 6:2).

**How** do I receive Christ? → Confess with your mouth, believe in your heart (*Rom* 10:9).

2) Have you ever been properly/biblically baptized? If you’ve received the Gospel…then also receive Baptism!

  - a. Baptism is NOT a burden.
  - b. Baptism is such a blessing.

The goal of this sermon is not to beat you up.
The goal of this sermon is to show you the beauty of obedience to God!
So what are we going to do today?

In a few moments, we are going to worship – and as we do – there are people who have chosen this day to let the world know they are with Christ.

- Christ has redeemed them.
- And we are going to celebrate!

1. Some of you have said “YES” to Jesus – but you’ve never been properly baptized. Today is your day! Today is the day to obey and go public!
   a. Not about religion.
   b. It’s about the relationship!

2. What are you talking about, Jeremy? I didn’t bring a towel or clothes!
   a. That’s okay!
   b. You need to be radical and say today is my day.
   c. We’ve got clothes and towels for you!

3. Many of you say you are waiting on the right timing. Waiting until we can get everyone here…
   a. I understand that BUT
   b. We are the ones who’ve made baptism about family celebration more than radical obedience. It’s not about family…it’s about obedience!

4. Some of you think: I got baptized as an infant in the Catholic, Presbyterian, or Methodist tradition. I’m not going to be a Baptist. I’m not asking you to be Baptist…I’m asking you to be obedient to God!
   a. What better way to honor your parent’s intentions?
   b. Your parents wanted you to follow God with your life – that’s why they had you go through religious steps as a child.
   c. Your parents wanted to baptize you into the faith…
      i. But today, come be baptized as you make the faith your own!

5. All across the Bible – water is the metaphor for a new beginning. We are going to celebrate many new beginnings this morning.
   a. Some of you need to respond and be obedient/radical.
   b. Let Christ and Baptism be your new beginning.