

**MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

January 14, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Epiphany; Baptism of Our Lord

First Lesson: [Isaiah 49:1-6](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 2

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Romans 6:1-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 1:4-11](#)

**It Begins with Baptism**

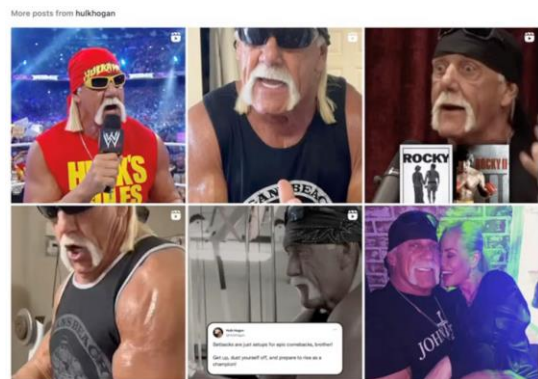
1. \_\_\_\_\_ into Christ, \_\_\_\_\_ by God
2. What about \_\_\_\_?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ to sin, \_\_\_\_\_ through Christ.

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

Today as we get into the Epiphany season, we talk about Jesus' baptism and we see that's the start of His ministry. We see that baptism is really important. We really see Jesus' ministry begin with that baptism. But we also see how important it is in our lives. We are going to start with something you might not expect us to talk about today in church.

Do you recognize this guy? I actually showed this to my 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Do you know how many of them knew who this was?—zero, no one. There maybe is a little generation gap, but I was surprised that none of them knew who Hulk Hogan was, so we had to google his entry video. If you're a wrestling fan, you know he has the theme song "A True American Hero" where the video starts out with J.F.K, the speech of J.F.K. Then he is playing the guitar and it has pictures of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, and he's a wrestler. They were like "Ewe!" because he's kind of greasy and sweaty. But, Hulk Hogan, why are we talking about Hulk Hogan?



We are going to see that just a few weeks ago, Hulk Hogan was baptized, which is a great thing. He has been sharing about his faith. He is on shows and wearing shirts that

say things like “John 3:16.” It’s a great thing. But, an important question when it comes to baptism is our next picture.

When we talk about what is baptism? When we talk about how important it is for us, we have to ask a question. Is baptism something that we do for God? Is it something that I do for God? Is it something that I can do to show my faith, to express my dedication or how committed I am to God? Or is it something that God is doing for me? And if everything begins with baptism, this is a really important question. How important is baptism and what does it really do? This is going to be a lot of the focus of our sermon, talking about what baptism actually does. Is it something I’m doing or something God does for me?



The reason to bring up Hulk Hogan is the next picture. You can see him getting baptized there and the words that he has in the caption is “Total surrender and



dedication to Jesus...” That’s what he captioned for the day of his baptism. I brought that up and showed that to the students and one of the students asked, “Isn’t that a good thing, to be totally dedicated and to surrender to Jesus?” I said “Yes, that is. It’s not a bad thing, but is that what our baptism is really about?”

When we look at Paul’s words, he is going to tell us a lot about baptism. We’ve been studying the Book of Romans on Sunday morning and in our online Bible study. We often go to these passages that speak about baptism to tell us what it is, but the whole section of Romans 4, 5 and 6 tell us so much about what baptism is. And here, it explains exactly what it is. He is going to talk a little bit about sin. We’ll get to that in a second, but in Verse 3 he says, **“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he**

***lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.***” Do you see who is really doing the action there? Did it speak about what WE are doing? In fact it speaks about what God is doing, what Christ has done, and what baptism does FOR us.

What is it really about? We are baptized into Christ, and this is worked by God. It's not something that we can do. These are all things that are given to us, over and over again, the blessings that are given. We see how important it is that we see it not an action that I do but something that God does for me. Then who can receive that baptism? If it's something that is done FOR me, it's done for those who need that forgiveness and need to be connected to Christ.

You can list all of the things that baptism does through the words we read. It connects us to Christ. It connects us to His death and His resurrection. It gives us a new life. In other parts of Scripture we hear that it works forgiveness. In Acts, when Peter is talking on Pentecost, he says, ***“Repent and be baptized...”*** Who is that promise for? It's for you and for your children. Receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. [\(Acts 2:38\)](#) So in baptism, we have the forgiveness of sins. We get that gift of the Holy Spirit. Notice all of the things that it is doing FOR YOU. Yes, I'm speaking this to many. Hopefully most of us are baptized. If you aren't, we can speak about baptism in the future. But notice all of these great things that baptism has done for you. It gives us that righteousness of Christ. It sets us free from sin. That's what he says here, that our old self is crucified.

Luther talks about how daily we can remember our baptism because it drowns our sinful nature. Over and over again, baptism declares things that God has done for you. Instead of me proclaiming that I am doing something for God, the simple way to say it is in baptism, God has called me His child. God adopts you and brings you into His family and does all these amazing things for you.

So why was this brought up in the first place? What does baptism mean for us today in our lives? Paul started out this section by saying, ***“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”*** What Paul had been doing is sharing grace and forgiveness and preaching grace so strongly that people were saying “Can we go on and sin? Because if I'm forgiven by grace and not by my works...” Over and over again he says “You're not saved by your works.” “Well, then I can sin. I can do whatever I want and God is going to forgive me.” The question that people should ask when we preach grace the way that God preaches it in the Bible, this free forgiveness, this wonderful grace, that people should start to say “It sounds too easy. So I can just sin and God will forgive me?” Paul says “Not exactly. By no means!” You might think *if God gives me grace when I sin, if I sin more, then I'm actually doing God a favor. I'm letting Him have more grace. He's an even more loving God and a more grace-filled*

*God if I have more sin.* Paul says "No! That's a silly way to think about it." Why? He's telling us about sin and what we do with this sin in our lives. He says that you have died to sin.

As Christians, we very often speak about repentance. We come to church and we hear that forgiveness of sins. We hear that we are sinners, so sometimes we can get into a rut and just say "Yeah, I'm a sinner. God will forgive me." We kind of get into this thought that it doesn't really matter what I do. In my salvation, are my good works something that will earn my way to heaven if I have sin? God says we are forgiven, but that doesn't mean that we want to live in sin and to continue in sin that we know is wrong. We know that sin hurts us. Sin hurts me and it hurts my relationship with God. Even though my sins are forgiven, sins have consequences. Most often, sin hurts relationships. The sins we commit often hurt the people closest to us. We can be forgiven, but often there are consequences. We know that sin causes problems. So what does God then say? *What about sin?*

If we look to what Hulk Hogan says in the second picture above, he talks about being committed to God. "If I dedicate myself, if I work hard enough, then I can lean on that." I still remember when I was in seminary in Mequon and I went to a Starbucks and there was a high school student and a youth pastor. I overheard their conversation. The high school girl was struggling with her faith. The encouragement that the youth pastor gave was "Remember the commitment you made to God." That's what this is, right? He's saying that total commitment, that total dedication to God, "I've committed myself..." Who are you putting your hope and your strength in to avoid sin and to grow your faith in? You are putting it in yourself and in your own strength. We know that's not what faith and what God is about, of leaning on ourselves for that. That's not what baptism is really about.

What is baptism really about? At the end again, he says count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Consider yourself *dead to sin, and alive through Christ*. That's what baptism means for you. When we baptize a little baby, we baptized a little baby boy (Archer) just a few weeks ago, my daughter (Kyriea) was baptized a couple months ago, what does that mean? Their sin has been washed away. God has given them a new heart. We count them dead to sin and alive to Christ. We can remember that every day. You have been forgiven. You are dead to sin and alive to Christ.

What does that mean? What does it mean to be dead to sin? He talks about that over and over again in this section. We have died with Christ and we have risen with Him. We should consider ourselves buried with Him. We have a new life. How am I dead to sin? Some of you are retired. If you're retired and you know if you would go back to work and put in a 40-hour week and they aren't going to pay you anymore, are you going to go in and sit there and work? Probably not, of course not! Of, if you're out of college and you have your college degree and then they say "Why don't you come back

here and study a little bit, but we're not going to give you a degree or any credits. Just sit in the classroom." What? You've moved on. You've graduated. You're done with that. So why would you go back to it? This is the picture that Paul is explaining to us; we're dead to sin. We're alive in Christ. We have something new. We've done away with sin, so we don't have to live in that anymore. It's like being retired. It's like being done with college and saying "Yeah, I'm just going to go back to that."

We do that though, don't we? We do that over and over again when we go back to sin, even though we know it doesn't control us anymore. It's not our master. But how often do we go back to it over and over again? He says to count ourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ. That baptism in Christ is not just some words. It's actually power. It does something. It's God giving you that strength and that power to say no to sin. How?—through faith; through the work of the Holy Spirit to connect you to Christ; for that Holy Spirit to work in you to help you to grow in your faith and in the Word, and to grow with other Christians; to encourage you to say no to sin.

Of course it's not saying we're going to be perfect. You will sin. You probably sinned this morning. You're going to sin today. But the idea is to understand "I don't want to go back to that. I don't want to ignore what God says and live in sin like I don't care or like it doesn't matter. I'm dead to sin and alive in Christ." Then, what does that really mean, to be alive in Christ?

We share this message. We share about baptism and want people to come to faith and be baptized, why? Do you also know when this section of Romans is often read? It's often read at a funeral. When we remember that someone who has been called home to heaven, they were baptized in their Lord. They've been buried with Christ. The death He died is their death, but also His resurrection is their resurrection. It's not by their works. It's not by how much they avoided that sin. It's through that righteousness that Christ has given. As He came on Christmas, as He was anointed and baptized and began His ministry, as He preached and did miracles and lived perfectly in your place, and then He went to the cross and suffered for you and showed He defeated sin and paid the punishment that you deserve. Then He rose again to show He had power over sin, death and the devil. And now, through baptism, we know that is ours. Not just today. It's a blessing we get to remember that every day—to remember your baptism is to remember that you are in Christ. You are a child of God. But what better day to remember that than when a loved one has been called home; to know that they have that resurrection with their Savior, with Christ, through baptism, through the work of Jesus. We know what a wonder it is that it all begins with baptism, but it also continues into eternity because of baptism and the work of Christ. Amen.

***And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.