

The Ordinances – Matthew 26:26-28, 28:19

I've been waiting for this Sunday for some time now. Today is one of the Sunday's we set aside for a special ceremony made available for all those who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and who have allowed Him to be Lord of their life. In a few moments, we will offer the Lord's Supper, not as an act of obligation, but as an act of obedience and remembrance. This morning also wraps up our series of messages which have focused on bringing us "Back to the Basics" of our faith. I don't know about you, but I cannot think of a better way to end this series than for us to gather out of obedience with the purpose of remembering our Savior and worshipping Him through this God ordained ceremony.

Before we get there, I want to spend some time addressing the reasoning behind our participating in the Lord's Supper. In all of Scripture, God has ordained and commanded just two ordinances for which the genuine believer should participate. Both ordinances are acts of obedience, with baptism usually occurring just once shortly after one's moment of salvation. The other, the Lord's Supper, occurring as often as is offered, and when the heart(s) of the person(s) is properly prepared to participate. My hope is for you to leave today with a greater understanding that Baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper are two of the most important commands given to us from Jesus. While they are things we should desire to participate in, they are also to be understood as holy ordinances, directly tied with our Christian walk, and filled with a deep spiritual significance.

Throughout the New Testament you will find various teachings concerning these ordinances, but the direct commands from Jesus can be found in Matthew 26:26-28 and in Matthew 28:19. Let's look first at baptism because we have already somewhat addressed it last week with our message concerning evangelism. **Read Matthew 28:19.** As you see here, Jesus tells us to baptize them. Who is "them"? New Believers, of course. How are we to do this? In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I absolutely love that the entirety of who God is, participates in our special moments! It just speaks again of how special you are to Him!

Baptism is a step of obedience - When we speak of baptism in the Baptist church, we refer to baptism, through immersion for a single believer. We trust this form of baptism more than any other because it is the method Jesus chose and demonstrated for us. Although Jesus never sinned and had no need for salvation, He went through the rite of baptism, as He said to John the Baptist; "to fulfill all righteousness." Truly, we can see that our Savior did this as a perfect example for us to learn from and to follow. We do not offer baptism to a person unless that person has publicly confessed that they have surrendered their heart to the saving grace offered them by Jesus. Most of the time, baptism is the first step of true obedience in the life of a new Christian, and it solidifies their desire to grow their relationship and trust with Jesus as Lord of their life. I think it's also important to note that we do not participate in infant baptism. Mainly because, nowhere in Scripture do we find it mentioned, practiced, or prescribed. In addition to this, we recognize the original meaning from the Greek *baptizo*, to mean "immerse", "plunge into", or "put into." *Baptizo* carries an entirely different use than the Greek words of *rantizo* and *cheo*. Those words mean to "sprinkle" over or to "pour over" and are not found in any of the New Testament writing which address baptism.

We also do not believe baptism has anything to do with one's salvation. Some people hold to a belief that the act of baptism works hand in hand with one's profession of faith and is a necessary step to complete the salvation process. However, God's Word teaches us that this is not the case. One example of this teaching is found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. **Read Ephesians 2:8-10.** Therefore, we must understand that Baptism does not save us. It is simply a physical act of obedience which demonstrates sincerity of belief in God's Word and acceptance of God's gracious gift of salvation, accomplished by Jesus on the cross. Only the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ saves a person.

Baptism is a symbol – Romans 6 gives us a better understanding for what baptism truly means for the believer. It symbolizes one's death to self, one's burial into Jesus Christ, and one's resurrection into new life. This is why baptism by immersion is the best way for us to demonstrate the importance of these things for our life, in a very public way. **Read Romans 6:3-11.**

I have a surprise for you. I secretly filled the baptismal. It may be a bit cold, but it's ready if you are? You know, many new Christians get off to a slow start in their walk of faith because they choose to forgo their baptism. Again, while it is not a requirement for your salvation, or even a requirement to participate in the Lord's Supper, it is a great way to be obedient to the command of Jesus and show other believers that you belong to Jesus and are ready to align with them and participate in this Christian community. Perhaps you're here this morning and you've never taken this step. I filled the pool because I want to offer this to you today. If you have given your heart to Jesus and wish to be baptized, simply come forward during our time of invitation and we'll help you take the next step.

Now, let's move on to the Lord's Supper. How often should a person participate in the Lord's Supper? Is there a specific number of times each year? Should we offer it every week? Or should we do it daily? Well, the Bible doesn't specifically direct us to how often we should observe the Lord's Supper, but it does teach us about its deep theological and spiritual significance. **Read Luke 22:19.** Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper for the purpose of reminding us of His saving work on the cross. And, when we read about it in 1 Corinthians 11:26, we discover that whenever we partake in this meal, we proclaim the death of Christ as necessary for our salvation and we proclaim our hope and anticipation of His second coming. It's not about the quantity but is absolutely about our desire to worship.

The Lord's Supper is also a way for us to unify as the bride of Christ around the supper table. Some of the sweetest moments in our relationships are often shared around a meal. When we share this meal together, we agree together that everything is in proper alignment personally as well as corporately, with the key component being that of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

The act of baptism denotes a changed life with a permanent identity in Christ; while participation in the Lord's Supper signifies that we are in right relationship with Him. Remember that Jesus said he was baptized, "to fulfill all righteousness." And because of Him, we are made "right." When we, upon our salvation, choose to participate in believers' baptism and then in the Lord's Supper, we are called to reflect on the power and work of Jesus in our lives. This reflection leads

us to make path corrections for our spiritual journey. None of us are perfect and all of us need God's power to help us make it in this life. As we reflect on our relationship with Jesus, it is His righteousness that leads us to reconcile with someone else if we need to. His righteousness calls us to consider our sins and seek repentance if we need to. Sometimes this reflection will cause us to feel the need to recommit or dig in a little more with hopes of becoming more like Christ. And perhaps more importantly, as we think about our Lord, we cannot but help remembering all He has done on our behalf. Participation in the Lord's Supper is restricted to those who are believers. There is nothing mysterious or secretive when it comes to this meal. Unbelievers are encouraged to observe the meal with hope that God's Spirit will draw them unto Him and at some point, they then will become participants. The Lord's supper is not to be taken lightly and should be viewed as a time of deep spiritual reflection for every believer. After all, it's one of the greatest gifts given to the church by Jesus himself.

Now, as I wrap up this month-long series of messages on getting "Back to the Basics", it stands out to me that these messages have challenged us to consider the true condition of our heart. So, I ask you this morning, has God spoken to you about where your heart is? Perhaps today is the day you decide to take the first step and surrender to the Spirit's call on your life and offer your heart to Jesus? Perhaps, today is the day you've decided that baptism is the next step? Are you ready to make that commitment? If so, the pool is prepared and is waiting. Perhaps, as we enter the ceremony of the Lord's Supper, you are ready to embrace the fullness of its meaning and fall more in love with Jesus? Only you know the decisions you need to make. We are going to play a song of invitation followed by the Lord's Supper. If you need to move in some way this morning, simply come forward during the song and I'll help you with what's next. If you know your heart needs a little fixing up before you participate in communion, take this moment to make the necessary preparations. Want you come?

Communion

- 1. Distribution of elements by Pastor and Elders** – I'm going to ask our Elders to come forward for distribution of the elements. Dwight and Chad to distribute crackers. Terry and Brian to distribute juice cups.
- 2. Prayer of blessing and remembrance**
- 3. Breaking of bread** – Read 1 Cor. 11:23-24 and raise wafer
 - a. This symbolizes the body of our Lord Jesus Christ that was broken and given for us. (People eat)**
- 4. Raising of the cup** – Read 1 Cor. 11:24-25 and raise cup
 - a. This symbolizes the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that was poured out for the forgiveness of our sins. (People drink)**
 - b. Close by reading verse 26**

Make offer for baptism