

Baptism Sunday

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, June 9, 2024
PASSAGES	Romans 6; 1 Peter 3; 1 John 1; Romans 5; Acts 16; Matthew 28
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:43:19 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Baptism does not draw its power from the water, from the words, or from the person holding you. It draws its power from a death and a resurrection that already happened and were done perfectly. Which means the qualification for stepping in is not maturity — it is a simple, childlike trust in Jesus.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The central focus of baptism is not the water. It is union with Christ — joining his death so that we join his resurrection life.
- ◆ The gospel does not get less true when the person preaching or baptizing is having an off day. Matt compared it to a calculus class: the math holds whether or not the professor is at his best.
- ◆ Peter says baptism is “not as a removal of dirt from the body” — it is not a bath. It is an appeal to God for a good conscience, and it works through the resurrection of Jesus.
- ◆ The clean conscience you feel on your own is not evidence. All have sinned; the fix is confession, and the load-bearing word in **1 John 1:9** is not *confess* but *faithful*.
- ◆ Sin earns death — that is the whole argument Paul builds toward in Romans, and the genealogies of Genesis make the same point one funeral at a time.
- ◆ If you are waiting to be ready enough, you will wait until you die. Wanting to be baptized is the readiness.

- ◆ Jesus did not hand his authority to the church and walk off the job. He kept it, and he stayed — which is why the work on you continues long after you are dry.

► 0:43:19

This was a compressed Sunday with a party at the end of it, and Matt said so plainly: he would preach about baptism briefly, the room would pray, the youth testimony videos would play, and then everyone would walk out to the corner where a very large tub of water was waiting. “It’s going to be a little bit on the warm side, but some of you will be wet,” he said, before promising water slides for the ones who weren’t. The service had opened with the congregation reading [Romans 8:14–17](#) aloud — the Spirit of adoption, the cry of *Abba*, heirs with Christ — and a reminder that under Roman law a man could disown a biological child but never an adopted one. That is the ground the rest of the morning stood on.

1. The point is not the water

► 0:47:36

Matt started where Paul starts.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into 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.”

ROMANS 6:3–4 ↗

“Our hope is that as we join in Christ’s death, we join also in his resurrection life,” Matt said. “That’s the focus. That’s the goal.” And it is precisely because the focus sits there that Hope Chapel hands the baptizing to parents, friends and deacons rather than reserving it for clergy. The grace of it is on Christ, not on the arms doing the lowering.

He named the anxiety people bring to him — *am I ready, can I do this, I got in a fight with my brother on the way to church* — and answered it with an illustration worth keeping. “Calculus was never less true when your professor was having an off day. Calculus is just true, even if your professor was rude or weird.” The confession of the gospel is like that. It does not fluctuate with the confidence of the person making it.

2. So how does it actually work?

► 0:49:57

For the practically minded, Matt went to Peter, who reaches back past the church to Noah and the eight people brought safely through water.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God... Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

1 PETER 3:18–21 ↗

► 0:51:38

Two things follow, and Matt drew both out. First, the mechanism is the resurrection — an event already completed and completed perfectly. So if you trip over your words, or the pool is slick and you dunk somebody early, none of it needs redoing. Second, “not a removal of dirt from the body” means what it sounds like: you are not taking a bath. Your conscience is not clean because you got washed.

3. “But my conscience already feels fine”

► 0:52:18

Then why would such a person need Jesus at all? Matt’s answer was that feelings make poor evidence here, and that self-justification almost always takes the same shape — *I may not be the best, but have you seen those people?* Paul closes that exit:

all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift.

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 JOHN 1:8–9 ↗

► 0:53:29

Here Matt slowed down to make a point about how to read the passage. John says the same thing on either side — if we claim we have no sin we are lying to ourselves — and that repetition is a structure, not the message. “The parallels on the outside are not the main point. It’s the core that’s the main point, in the middle.” And the core is *he is faithful*. The verse is not finally about the quality of our confessing. It is about the reliability of the one receiving it.

4. The genealogy of death

► 0:53:58

If everyone has sinned, why is it a big deal? Because the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Sin is not merely regrettable; it has been earning something.

Matt traced the argument Paul builds — opening in Romans 1 with God's wrath against sin, arriving in Romans 5 at Adam — and then pointed at the genealogies themselves. Every entry runs the same way: he lived, he had a son, he lived a while longer, and he died. And he died. And he died. The one exception is Enoch, who walked with God — which Matt read as foreshadowing rather than an accident of the record.

► 0:56:16

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

ROMANS 5:6-8 ↗

► 0:56:51

Most of us, Matt allowed, could imagine dying for a stranger on a good day. That is not the comparison. “God died for his enemies — people who spit at him, insulted him, belittled his glory, demeaned him, turned away and fought against his very mercy. These are the people that Christ died for. In other words, you and me.” He died *for* us in the sense of benefit, and *instead of* us in the sense of the penalty.

► 0:57:33

And there is another face on that coin. Since God alone possesses immortality, giving us eternal life means giving us something only he has — Matt's picture was a divine blood donor, losing his life in the act of handing life over. It is why Peter can say we become partakers of the divine nature. We live forever hidden in him, mysteriously, because of our union with Christ.

5. “What must I do?”

► 0:58:08

Bottom-line people, Matt said, are welcome here — and they have company in scripture.

“Then he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”

ACTS 16:30-31 ↗

The apostles were not withholding a larger, more complicated answer for later. That was the whole answer, given to an earnest, straightforward question.

► 0:58:50

“Sometimes we make it more complicated,” Matt said, “but Jesus encouraged us to come to him like little children do, in a simple, trusting attitude.” Which is exactly why baptism is a confession rather than a mechanism: “There’s not a power in the water, but a confession, because we’re making an appeal to God for a clean conscience.” Belief is what the whole thing is aiming at, and it is why Hope goes to the trouble of recording, captioning and amplifying the youth testimonies — so the younger ones can articulate that belief with a little help, in front of their peers. The adults get the same care in a different form: out at the water they will be asked to make a confession too, led through it with questions rather than left to improvise.

► 1:00:05

He kept reading, and pointed at the clock in the text:

that same hour of the night, the jailer washed their wounds and was baptized at once, he and all his family. Meaning there was still time this morning for anyone who had not signed up. “The most last-minute request I’ve ever had was on the way to the pool. So if you want a new record, you can ask at the pool.”

6. Am I ready?

► 1:01:27

This is the question Matt says he fields most in the baptism classes, and his answer was blunt: “If you’re waiting until you’ve reached one hundred percent maturity in the faith — you will die waiting.” If you are wondering whether you are ready and you want to be baptized, you are ready. Jesus held up a child and told them to let the little ones come. It sounds too easy, Matt admitted, too good to be true — but the yoke really is easy and the burden really is light. His concern was the opposite failure: “Men like me overly complicate. I don’t want to get in the way, stand in the doorway and not enter myself, or let others enter.”

► 1:03:18

What he did not do is oversell the day. Since relationship is the goal, expect him to keep working after the water. Most people who have walked with the Lord for any length of time know the pattern — a

stretch of victory, then trouble, then genuine shock at your own immaturity, and then the Lord picking you up and using his rod and his staff to comfort, guide and redirect. Sometimes it stings. It is not the day you graduate. “Don’t hang up your certificate of Christian and retire.”

7. He did not hand off the job

► 1:04:59

The last stretch got interrupted — a small phone tree of texts going out from the front row to get the next person back up — and Matt simply let the room have it. He had joked that nobody wants a long sermon on a June baptism Sunday; someone had already told him the congregation’s honest answer to that: “We wouldn’t be mad, we would just start leaving and start doing the baptisms without you.” “That’s fair,” he said. “We are a very congregational church.” Then he went to the one verse he had left.

► 1:05:41

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:18–20 ↗

► 1:06:17

Matt wanted the room to notice what the text does not say. “Christ did not say all authority in heaven was briefly given to me, but I have now hot-potatoed it to the church, because I really want to get out of here. I have stuff to do. Finish the job.” We supply a verse 18-and-a-half of our own making, he said — *and I therefore give you all authority* — and it isn’t there. Go look for it. He retains it. The reason we walk in his authority at all is that we are walking in him: a very present captain, a shepherd who has not left and will not.

► 1:07:54

Two more things came out of the commission. First, baptizing is in the sentence, which makes this an act of obedience — “one of his love languages,” Matt said — for anyone still weighing it. Second, the verb is *observe*, not *know*: “It didn’t say teach the world everything I’ve said, as if we’re mere conveyors of facts. He said teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Jesus is the project manager of the church and of your life, and the church is his bride, not his outsourced contractor.

► 1:08:41

And he put the weight-bearing clause on Christ rather than on us: “Our job, as we are mysteriously hidden in him, walking in him, is to do what he said — to teach to observe all that he’s commanded, knowing that in our weakness he will be strong.” Learning to observe is not a curriculum you complete. It is the rest of your life, “as God in his rich mercy and grace forms Christ in you.”

How the morning ended

► 1:09:51

Rather than fill the gap while the children’s and middle school ministries filed back in, Matt broke the room into groups of three or four and gave two prayer points: that God would strengthen the conviction of everyone being baptized, and that he would send more laborers into the harvest field. If you forget one, he said, someone in your group will remember; if nobody remembers, pray anyway — “the Lord will lead you in your prayers.”

He also apologized to the guests for how loose the hour had been, and then declined to sell the apology: “I would say we’re not usually this silly, but that wouldn’t be true.” Which was, in its own way, the argument of the whole message. Nobody in the room had to be impressive for any of it to hold. Then the testimony videos, then the walk outside — to a warm tub of water that was never where the power was in the first place.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Romans 8:14–17](#)
- [Romans 6:3–4](#)
- [1 Peter 3:18–21](#)
- [Romans 3:23–24](#)
- [1 John 1:8–9](#)
- [Romans 6:23](#)
- [Romans 1:18](#)
- [Genesis 5:24](#)
- [Romans 5:6–8](#)
- [1 Timothy 6:16](#)
- [2 Peter 1:4](#)
- [Acts 16:30–31](#)
- [Acts 16:32–33](#)
- [Matthew 19:14](#)
- [Matthew 11:30](#)
- [Psalm 23:4](#)
- [Matthew 28:18–20](#)
- [Matthew 9:37–38](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt said the focus of baptism is never the water and never the person doing it. Where have you quietly located the power somewhere other than Christ — in a moment, a feeling, or a person?
2. Read 1 John 1:8–9 again with Matt's structure in mind. What changes when the weight of the verse falls on God being faithful rather than on you confessing well?
3. Romans 5 says Christ died for people who fought against his mercy. What does it do to you to be described that way, rather than as someone worth dying for?
4. "If you're waiting until you've reached one hundred percent maturity, you will die waiting." What are you postponing until you feel ready enough?
5. Jesus told us to teach people to observe, not just to know. Name one thing he has commanded that you know well and are not yet doing — and what obeying it would look like this week.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jg88j6E2crQ&t=2599s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.