

# Jesus Comes to Save:

## How Do We Talk to Kids about Baptism?

Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-6; 21-22; John 1:29-34

Resources:

*The Gospel Story Bible* by Marty Machowski, page 166

*The Beginner's Gospel Story Bible* by Jared Kennedy, page 182

*The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones, page 200

When we discuss baptism with kids, one of the best places to start is with the baptism of Jesus, which is recorded in all four Gospels.. Although children may not grasp all of its significance, it is important for us as adults to note:

- John sees the Spirit descend and remain on Jesus in the form of a dove and hears the Father's voice as He announces, 'This is My Son in whom I am well pleased!'
- It is the announcement of John the Baptist that Jesus is the 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world', which creates an expectation of sacrifice, since there was no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22).
- It is Jesus' insistence on being baptized to 'fulfill all righteousness' and identify with humanity in our spiritual need as a symbolic act of His willingness to take our sin upon Himself.
- It signals the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

Of course, when we witness a baptism in a worship service, we may not be thinking about all of these things. We certainly rejoice with the family, especially if it is a child, and claim with them God's faithfulness to reveal His grace to them as they grow. We have probably been taught that baptism is the symbol of repentance (think about John the Baptist and his message! Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:3; John 1:26) from sin, which is true, but it is so much more than that!

In the Evangelical Presbyterian Church we practice infant baptism and believers' baptism as a public profession of faith. While the latter is obvious, the former may not be as easily explained. We liken infant baptism to the Old Testament practice of circumcision, as a sign and seal that the child belongs to the covenant family of faith. Parents are demonstrating their trust in God's faithfulness to bring the child to faith in Christ in accordance with God's perfect timing, along with the parents' promise to raise the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4).

However, one of the most concrete ideas about baptism that can be grasped by children is that it is a physical sign and symbol foreshadowing Jesus' own death, burial and resurrection. Likewise, the Apostle Paul connected baptism to symbolize our death to self and resurrection to new life in Christ. Jesus is our forerunner in baptism and in resurrection. As adults, we can help children to connect the imagery of being lowered under the water as a 'burial' and coming back up out of the water as a 'resurrection'.

*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. Romans 6:4, (NIV)*

*For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. Colossians 2:12, (New Living Translation)*

In this task of parenting young disciples, we are grateful for the reminder that baptism gives us: the tangible image of Jesus' ultimate mission to die on behalf of sinners and bring new life to us through His resurrection! We rejoice and celebrate this good news of the Gospel every time we witness a baptism. If your child expresses a desire to be baptized, please contact us so that we can continue the conversation with you!