

## *Baptized with the Holy Spirit*

Sunday School Lesson

I Corinthians 1:4-17

June 15, 2025

In 2008, we had a real treat at Annual Conference. We were all used to coming to Conference and experiencing Communion, Ordination, and Commissioning. What we rarely expected was to witness a baptism but this year, we did. Two United Methodist ministers, Susan and Justin Ledbetter, came forward to bring their four-month old daughter, Sadie, for baptism. Bishop Charles Crutchfield was thrilled to do the honor. As our lesson explains, clergy couples often serve different congregations and the membership of ordained clergy moves from the local church to the annual conference when they are commissioned. Susan and Justin were choosing to baptize their daughter in their church family, the Arkansas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Two of my children were baptized by Rev. James Moore at St Luke's United Methodist Church in Houston and my youngest was baptized by Rev. Sam Lindamood at Piedmont Community Church in Piedmont, California. Sam also baptized their dad. I was baptized at Second Baptist Church in El Dorado, Arkansas by Bro. Tom Bray. You can probably identify the pastor who baptized you and where you were baptized. All of these ministers were special to my family and will remain in our hearts but none of them are competing for our affection. Just because one baptism was done by a bishop and two by a well-known author does not mean that their baptisms are more relevant than any other. The power is in the baptism, not in the person performing the baptism.

Let us pray

**O Holy God, transform our lives as we follow you. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear and most of all, hearts that do not judge. Amen.**

Our Purpose Statement: **To explore what it means to be united in Christ through one baptism.**

Baptism was never meant to be controversial but we have certainly made it controversial since the first century. John the Baptizer was not the first to baptize. Baptism was a cleansing ritual that was adopted into the faith as not just a baptism of water but of the Holy Spirit. John baptized many but Jesus is the first one recorded who received the Spirit as a part of the ritual. In the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Jesus left specific instructions for the purpose of baptism but he did not leave specific instructions on the method, the amount of water, or how wet you were supposed to get. He did clearly show us that our identity is found in our baptism. He also made it clear that it was not the water that did the trick but the Spirit that makes the difference. As the

disciples traveled, they discovered that many people had been baptized with water but not baptized with the spirit. They often changed that and the difference was immediate and huge!

### **Competition Does Not Belong in the Church**

Competition is a way of life for those of us living in modern times. We receive an award for not missing a Sunday in church or school. We have Church of the Year Awards or on Mother's day, we honor the oldest mother. At age three, most of our children are enrolled in some form of competition whether it is T-ball, soccer, or gymnastics. Memorize a scripture? You get a star! Collect so many stars, you get a prize. My specialty growing up was Bible drills. I could find a Scripture faster than most of my peers. That did not make me a better human or a better Christian.

The church in Corinth was a very competitive bunch. And they argued over who was the best preacher and the best minister to the flock. Let me give you a clue; it would likely never be Paul. Apollos was known as being an exceptional preacher and so many praised him. Many liked Peter on the occasion he came through to preach. We preachers are very aware that members of our congregation have special attachments to former ministers. Maybe Buddy Ratliff was there for you during a particularly difficult period in your life. Maybe John Dill did your mother's funeral. Maybe Ralph Hale baptized all your family. Maybe Fred Hunter did your wedding. And we know that some pastors are consistently better preachers than others and we do have preferences. Maybe when you were sick, you listened to John Robbins on the Pulaski Heights television broadcast.

In the United Methodist Church, we have pastors for a season. Some might be a long season and some might be short. But they are there for their particular gifts and our preference for another pastor should never hinder the acceptance of the wisdom of God. Our mission and vision is harmed when we started the painful process of constant comparisons and complaints.

### **We Belong to Christ**

God often disrupts our comfort. God is the action agent in our lives and in our communities of faith. And God knows exactly what God is doing. Our identity is found in our baptism. We are all one in Christ and we are identified by our baptism. It does not matter the method or the ordained clergy performing our baptism or even the denomination into which we were baptized.

*You are one body and one spirit, just as God also called you in one hope. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all. Ephesians 4:4-6*

Let us pray:

**Holy Jesus, our living water, meet us where we are and offer us your life-giving presence and Spirit. May your grace overflow to all we meet this week. Bring your healing and wholeness to our community today. Amen.**