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Joyfully Baptized _____

Essay by Rev. Daniel P. Landin



One of the great joys and primary tasks of pastoral ministry is found in the administration of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Regardless of how often I have had the privilege of baptizing individuals in the three different churches I have been privileged to serve in, each time has been a precious moment for me. Over the past three and a half years, my current call has had the blessing of witnessing 34 baptisms, with another one scheduled in the next few days as of this writing!

Yet as frequent as baptisms have been in this parish of late, baptism finds its place in my sermons even more frequently. I have two reasons for this.

First, as Lutherans, we believe, teach, and confess that Holy Baptism is necessary for salvation. Therefore, it is vital to our lives as Christians that we be reminded of God's work in our lives and the promises he gives to us in his Word and Sacraments. Those primary promises are that God forgives our sins, rescues us from death and the devil, and gives us the sure and certain hope of eternal salvation! What this tells us is that baptism is all about God and his work in our lives, not about what we have done or choose to do for him.

Secondly, I bring up baptism in my sermons often because of my great love for baptism and the comfort it brings my conscience on a daily basis.

I wish that I could say otherwise, but this love that I have for baptism and God's work in it has not always been a part of my life. Even though the church body that I grew up in acknowledges its origins in the Swedish Lutheran Church, one of the few remaining Lutheran distinctives left about it now is that they still hold to the doctrine that salvation is by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. As far as baptism goes, individ-

Baptism is all about God and his work in our lives, not about what we have done or choose to do for him.

ual pastors and churches in that church body are allowed to choose whether they want to baptize babies or only baptize professing Christians later in life.

At my childhood church, I was taught that baptism was merely a public symbol of my commitment to Christ, not something that God did to me. I was also taught that my salvation was dependent upon me asking Jesus to be my Savior and to come into my heart. So, as a result, two things were at play for me in my childhood and early adulthood. First, I constantly battled fear and doubt over whether or not I was saved. That led to many recitations of the Sinner's Prayer and never being sure that the last time was good enough to be saved. Second, my baptism meant very little to me since it only symbolized my commitment to Christ.

Thankfully, God led me into the Lutheran Church. Part of that journey was coming to the realization that the only thing that I contributed to my salvation was my need of being saved! When God opened my eyes to his work in baptism, it changed my life forever. Now, I am no longer worried about whether I am saved or not! Instead, I look to what God has done for me and his sure promises given in baptism. And rather than looking back at my baptism as a footnote in my journey of faith, it has become the solid foundation from which I start and end each day. Worry no longer fills my life. I live with a confident joy when I remember that I am baptized! 

Rev. Daniel P. Landin STS of Holland, Indiana, is pastor of [St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church](#).

Journey Through the Psalms

Mini Bible Study Installment



PSALM 9:1-2,9-10,18

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.

I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.

“The ABCs of Kindness,” “Once Upon An Alphabet,” “Y is for Y’all: A Southern Book of ABCs” — these are a few of my favorite alphabet books. This genre uses rhyming schemes, illustrations, and stories to teach children the order and sounds of the alphabet, the basic building blocks of language. Any attempt to translate these books quickly spirals into a nightmare. “Y is for Y’all” wouldn’t work in French because “V is for Vous.” And English and French share an alphabet! Imagine trying to translate similar books into Chinese or Arabic — languages with different building blocks altogether.

This is exactly what the translators of the Old Testament had to attempt with Psalms 9 and 10. These two psalms originally comprised a singular prayer, and when preserved in their original language and structure, an ancient alphabet book is revealed. Psalms 9 and 10 create an acrostic poem, using the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to share the story of God and his relationship with his people. It’s understandable that the translators were unable to preserve this structure in English, but we miss out on the reality that this poem is “The ABCs of Faith.” It offers to us a reminder that the language of our faith may take us through seasons of lament and doubt, but that God’s goodness necessarily means that faith will always begin and end in a place of thanksgiving.

Read the Psalm and reflect upon the following

questions provided for personal devotions or in a short Bible study session with group discussion.

1. What is the psalmist thankful for in v. 3-12? What stories in the Old Testament do these verses remind you of? In the New Testament?
2. Verse 20 ends with the proclamation that the nations are men and God is God. How does this verse convict us? How does this verse give us hope?
3. What would you write for the ABCs of faith? How would it begin? How would it end?
4. Write an acrostic poem using your name or Jesus’ name to talk about God’s presence in your life. Each line of the poem should begin each successive letter of the chosen name. (Lines don’t need to rhyme!) Consider why you chose these words to reflect your relationship with the Lord.

PRAYER

Holy Father, you spoke the world into being. Un-stop our tongues so that we may sing your praises and declare your wonderful deeds. Remember us in our needfulness and brokenness for the sake of your beloved son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. 

The author of this installment, **Rev. Taylor Rister-Stempniak** of Fresno, California, is pastor of [Immanuel Lutheran Church in the community of Easton](#).

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Ministry Partner Focus by Dan Antoine

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Established in 1924, Ingham Okobojo Lutheran Bible Camps has served as a partner in ministry with congregations for over 100 years to offer a place set apart for rest, refreshment, and renewal. A wide variety of retreats and camp experiences are held year-round between their two unique lakeside locations — Ingham Lake Bible Camp near Wallingford, Iowa, and Okobojo Lutheran Bible Camp near Milford, Iowa.

Ingham Okobojo holds nine weeks of camp each summer, including Youth Camps, Family Camps, and Day Camps. Youth Camps range from one day to one week long with options for ages 4-18. Family Camps include all ages — from babies to 80s — and provide fun and spiritual content for everyone. Day Camp teams travel to partner congregations to deliver the camp's VBS-style program to more than 1,000 campers each summer!

The camps also host retreats throughout the school year. Weekend programs put on by the camp include Spring and Fall Recharges (weekend youth retreats), Women's Day Away, Travel Camp, Crafting Retreats, Marriage Retreat, and Spring and Fall Eldersversity (for kids 55 and older). Additionally, many groups and families utilize the camps for their own retreats.

Ministry to campers is the heartbeat of Ingham Okobojo, but to accomplish that feat the camps hire up to 75 summer staff EACH SUMMER (most of whom are young adults). Here's what some of



While many young adults feel forgotten by the church, at camp they are given opportunities every day to develop their gifts, hone leadership skills, and make lifelong Christian friends (while getting paid to do it).

them said about their experience.

"As someone who grew up in a broken, non-believing household, serving at family camp helped me to better understand what kind of Jesus-centered family I want to have in the future...."

"I feel much more confident in who the Lord has called me to be and feel that I have grown in my leadership and communication skills."

"I have grown so much in my faith, but also as a person! Serving on staff was so fun and helped me become a more independent and confident person."

Find out how the camps can partner with your family or congregation. 

Dan Antoine is the Director of Programs at Ingham Okobojo. Contact him at dan@okobojo.org.

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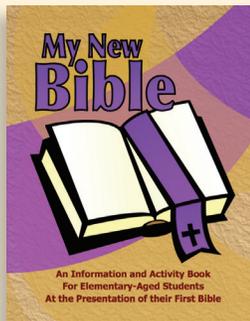
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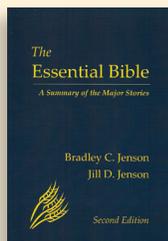
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The five-session **My New Bible** activity and study book by Rev. Dr. Steven E. King is designed to accompany the presentation of the Holy Scriptures to elementary students. It is prepared for use with the American Bible Society's Holy Bible Children's Illustrated Edition (CEV). Sample session available. [Item S-3050, \\$6.99, solapublishing.com](#)



OVERVIEW

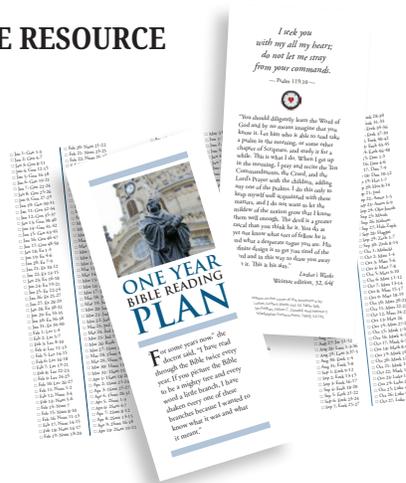
The Essential Bible by Rev. Bradley Jensen and Jill Jensen offers a readable summary of all the major stories in both testaments. It serves as a tool for teaching about the most important people and events in the scriptures. [Item B-J550, \\$12, solapublishing.com](#)

THIS MONTH'S UNEXPECTEDLY AWESOME RESOURCE

Sola Publishing offers a Bible in a Year reading plan brochure that is free to print and reproduce for all members of a family, congregation, school, care community, or others.

While the brochure begins with Jan. 1, the reader can begin on any day of the year and simply mark the checkboxes until all are complete — in date order, randomly, or in some combination.

Visit solapublishing.com and use the Home drop menu to navigate to Free Resources > Adult Education. The reading plan is the first item on the page. Additional resources are also available.



... AND A GAME

Reading in print? Find words from the following Martin Luther quotation in the word search. Reading Connections Online through your browser? [Work this word search online.](#)

“You should diligently learn the Word of God and by no means imagine that you know it. Let him who is able to read take a psalm in the morning, or some other chapter of Scripture, and study it for a while. This is what I do. When I get up in the morning, I pray and recite the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer with the children, adding any one of the psalms. I do this only to keep myself well acquainted with these matters, and I do not want to let the mildew of the notion grow that I know them well enough. The devil is a greater rascal than you think he is. You do as yet not know what sort of fellow he is and what a desperate rogue you are. His definite design is to get you tired of the Word and in this way to draw you away from it. This is his aim.” (Luther’s Works Weimar edition, 32, 64f)

O	G	X	Q	D	E	S	I	G	N	N	A	T	C	Y	C	diligently	children
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T	D	D	F	L	Y	L	T	N	E	G	I	L	I	D	O	psalm	fellow
U	M	R	E	I	D	D	E	F	I	N	I	T	E	L	G	morning	desperate
R	E	E	L	M	T	R	M	M	D	Z	Y	H	E	P	Y	chapter	rogue
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