

Sermon for A Year with the Catechism Baptism: How can water do such great things?

Date: May 8, 2022

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Isaiah 43:1-7

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:1-12



Sermon Text: Matthew 3:13-17

Sermon Title: How can water do such great things?

Introit: Psalm 89:1,26-28; Antiphon Psalm 89:20

Hymns:

LSB 598 – Once in the Blest Baptismal Waters

LSB 601 – All Who Believe and Are Baptized

LSB 602 – The Gift Christ Freely Gives

Songs:

The Word - Sara Groves

Word Of God Speak - Mercy Me

The River - Jordan Feliz

The Blessing

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



Text: Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:1–26

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

NOTE: Copyright information.

© 2021 Pastor James Groleau.

Permission is granted to use these sermons for any non-profit purpose. I only ask that credit, as to their origination, be noted appropriately.

I pray the gifts of the Spirit: Grace, mercy and peace, to you from God our Father, and from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

A lot of people want to be in shape but don't want to exercise. Many want to be musicians but don't want to practice. People want to be smart but don't want to study. Folks want a good job but don't want to start at the bottom and work their way up. Many want to be rich but don't want to earn it. We want to be blessed but don't want to be anything like what we heard in the Gospel reading. Many want to claim they are Christians but don't really want Christ. At least not if He comes like this.

Poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, truly merciful, pure in heart, peacemaker, persecuted, and reviled meaning: abused, hated and mistreated? We want to be blessed but without all of that 'Jesus' stuff?

Without a doubt we are very blessed. When our biggest complaint is not having the latest and greatest electronic gadget, when our biggest concern is not whether we're going to eat but where we're going to eat, when the only real bombs about which we have to worry are the ones spelled with four letter, with: closets full of clothes, garages full of cars, and homes full of things we don't use, we are very blessed.

Are we? Is that what truly constitutes as blessed? It can, but all of that blessing can become an idol. These things, and more, can become blessings that are turn against us? Are we slaves to our devices, spoiled by our riches, thinking of all this not as blessing and gifts, but what we deserve and what we have earned? Are we rich in the things of this world and poor in the things of God? Jesus said:

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.¹

These words we heard from Jesus are the first words in the Sermon on the Mount. They are often called the Beatitudes. They come from right at the very start of His ministry. Jesus had just been baptized. Then He was sent out into the wilderness to be tempted for 40 days. Following that He gathered the twelve who would form the core group of those who would tell others about Him and His message. With all of that done He speaks these words. Words explaining what He will do? He will bless.

Who does He bless? Those who will experience all of those things we don't like: poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemaker, persecuted and reviled. If these are the ones who are blessed, then to not want to be these things means not wanting to be

1 Matthew 6:21

blessed? If Jesus wants to bless you (and He does), then He will bring these things into your life in order to bless you. To avoid these things means to avoid His blessing? To miss out on all that He has for us? By avoiding these things are we really robbing ourselves of His blessings?

It's important to see this in the correct light. To be **poor in spirit** is to know we are spiritually broken by sin, and in sin. It's easy to acknowledge that here in: rote memorized confession before God, and receive Absolution we barely hear, but what about before others? Are we as willing to repent personally? If not we are robbing ourselves of the blessing of forgiveness.

To **mourn**. Ever notice that one of the times we get to see people we haven't seen for a long time is at funerals? We don't have enough time for each other in life, but our common enemy 'Death' brings us together. Why only then? Maybe it's because it is then we can no longer hide it. We've all done it. "How are you doing?" and we pop off a quick: "Fine." When we're not. When we are hiding the hurt that comes from others. When we're mourning something inside but we're afraid, or too proud, to let others see it. Are we robbing ourselves of blessing, of the communion, fellowship and comfort God has prepared for us and wants to give us?

Meek. You might think meek people are timid, failures or cowards, but they're not. It's just that they are bold for others, not for themselves. They think and act for others, giving in accord with Jesus' words and way, and getting richer for it. Gaining by giving. Jesus said, "It is better to give than receive."² That is because the only true way to profit is in generosity.³

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness. There are plenty of people who hunger and thirst to be right regardless of how wrong they are. They want to be right in justifying the gossip and lies they tell, the reputations they have torn apart. They want to be right in the facade of Christianity they put on, as they sin in Jesus' name. But RIGHTEOUS? Not so much. To actually act like a Christian, a follower of Christ.

People want the satisfaction of winning, often at any expense. Even at the expense of souls. Can such a person be a Christian? Can one who destroys souls and tears down faith be a Christian? Jesus say no. He calls us to share the Gospel. Jesus said:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the

2 Acts 20:35

3 2 Corinthians 9:7-8

Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.⁴

He also said:

A house divided against itself cannot not stand.⁵

He calls us to share the Gospel. He calls those who destroy souls and tear down faith, children of Satan. Listen to His Words:

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.⁶

When one lies and spreads gossip about a Baptized believer in Christ whose work are you doing?

Jesus said:

Woe to you... hypocrites! You shut the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces. You neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. Woe to you... hypocrites! You would travel across sea and land to make a single convert [to your way], and... make him twice as much a child of hell as you are.⁷

These are Jesus' Words to those who would gather around His Word in name, but in practice serve the enemy of the Church. Who are those who are satisfied? Are they the ones who want to be right, or the ones who receive from God what they are not, and do not have; God's righteousness?

Merciful. Some see one who is suffering and see only an opportunity to pile on more suffering. Do not some rob themselves of God's blessings by not being bothered by those who ask for help? Are not the truly blessed those who answer Gods' call to care.

Pure in heart. We sing it so often after a sermon:

“Create in me a clean heart (*a pure heart*) O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

4 Matthew 23:19-20

5 Matthew 12:25

6 John 8:44

7 Matthew 23:13-15

Cast me not away from Thy presence,
and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.⁸

A pure heart is a heart filled with the Holy Spirit, a heart that sees God in the person of Jesus, and who serves God by seeing Him in the person of our neighbor. “Where your heart is, there your treasure will be.”⁹ If our hearts cling to other things, things of this world, things of Satan, are we not robbing ourselves of God’s blessing?

Peacemakers. There are some who sow and seed of division and dissension. There are those who like to whisper in dark corners, under shadow and in secret meetings, gossip that destroys. It destroys souls. It destroys faith. It destroys Jesus’ Church, His Bride. Such people wallow in their sin taking glory in the pain they can cause. Real peace comes in Confession and by those who are quick to forgive, eager to forgive, and to share in the shower of God’s riches which you receive in such places like Holy Absolution, Holy Communion and Holy Baptism. The power of forgiveness given in private confession is powerful; to be embraced in Christian love and offered forgiveness which we know we do not deserve, should leave a mark. It is so sad there are so many for whom it does not. It is so sad there are so many who would never consider receiving this God given gift.

Persecuted and reviled. Attached and hated. Abused and mistreated. No one wants to be persecuted and reviled. So they’ll keep their mouth shut when they should speak up. They’ll go along with the crowd instead of defending the one who is attacked. They’ll think they are winning, but are they gaining or losing? When they look in the mirror what do they see: cowardice, contempt for God’s love and grace, pride in the pain they’ve caused? Be it the mirror on the wall, or the mirror of God’s Law, the debt is the same. You cannot stand in two houses. You are a follower of Christ or a follower of Satan. Where stand you?

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount speaks so boldly. It calls us to repentance because forgiveness and righteousness come to us on the vehicle of repentance and confession. With these words Jesus would open our eyes to see things differently, and to see Him differently.

Jesus has come to drain the sinful swamp of our hearts and lives, and then to pour into us the blessings He gives. The blessings of: Himself, His forgiveness, His Spirit, and the new life to which He raises you. So instead of being drowned in the

8 Offertory, LSB p.192-193

9 Matthew 6:21

swamp of sin, we get drowned in the water of Holy Baptism and are born again, born from above,¹⁰ returned to the image and likeness of God.¹¹

Instead of dining with the devil, we dine on the Body and Blood of Christ. Instead of being wise in the ways of the world, we are filled with the wisdom of the Word of God. It is in these things we receive His blessings.

All of this starts in the waters of Holy Baptism. Your Baptism which you should remember daily, and drown in daily. It is here blessings uncountable come. Today we are asking, "How can water do such great things?"

It is because true blessings are not found at the top, be it the top of the corporate ladder, the king of the hill, or at the top of a mountain. True blessings are found at the bottom. They are found at the bottom of a Baptism font. The bottom is where you find Jesus.

Jesus came down for sinners. Jesus came down to the down and out. Jesus came all the way down to the cross, and to death, and to the grave. Jesus comes down to where you are. At the bottom of this font you find Jesus. In the sacred gift of Holy Baptism there is so much more than water. There is stuff in the water. There is Jesus in the water. There is God's Word in the water. There is the Holy Spirit in the water. The blessings of the Beatitudes are in the water.

You are Baptized into Him and He pours Himself into you. He speaks His absolution into your ears. He puts Himself into your mouths that you become what you eat, and are nourished and fed by Him. He has done it, and is doing it still, everyday. He has provided for you, and is still. You are blessed.

How can water do such great things? It can't. It can't until we come in humility and humble hearts, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, instead of hungering and thirsting for souls ripped and torn apart by gossip and lies. Jesus said:

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved...

We like that part of the verse but it is only part of the verse. It is not what Jesus said. He said:

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved,
but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Where stand you? Will you dine with the devil before this altar in contempt of God's grace, or will you approach in confession seeking forgiveness, in humbleness and unworthiness, to be made worthy?

¹⁰ John 3:3

¹¹ Genesis 1:26

Those who deny themselves these gifts deny themselves Heaven. The blessings of God are received on the vehicle of repentance and confession. They come through the Means of Grace. Foolishness to those being condemned, but great grace to the saved.¹²

These sacred acts, these Sacraments, are given as anchors for our faith, as faith filling food. Blessed are those who confess, repent and come.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**



12 1 Corinthians 1:20