

"Just Do It"

Text: Romans 6:1-11

"May the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you." Amen. (1 Peter 5:10)

Dear Fellow Christians:

Is there anyone here above the age of two who hasn't experienced one of those "I'm just too tired" moments? It can even hit you when you are sitting all comfy and relaxed in your favorite recliner. The show is over and it's time for bed, but oi. You're just too tired to get up and get ready for bed.

I have a remedy for those situations that seems to work for me. I call myself names, derogatory names like "Nancy" and "sissy" and "big baby" - always ending with the same phrase: "Just do it." The fact is I don't know that I've ever been so exhausted that I really *couldn't* get up and go to bed. It's really just a mental thing, isn't it? It's not that you *can't* do it; it's just that you don't *want* to. In other words, if someone lit the chair on fire, I wouldn't have any problem popping out of it with all the energy of a four-year-old that missed his last couple of Ritalin doses.

There are countless things like that in our lives, nearly every day. Things we know we ought to do, but that we successfully avoid because "we are just too tired" or "we just don't feel like it." Many of them are related to the health and wellbeing of our souls, which makes this anything but an inconsequential issue. There are many things that our God tells us to do for the good of our own souls, and yet somehow we still allow ourselves the option of deliberating whether or not we should or will actually do them. I'm sure everyone can come up with your own examples – personal and family devotions, personal Bible reading, church attendance, availing ourselves of the benefits of the Lord's Supper when it is offered, and – the one on which we focus this morning – baptism. Baptism? Isn't that just a "one and done"? The point of our text is that it's not supposed to be.

The text that will guide and inform our study on this the Sunday when we commemorate the baptism of Jesus, and are reminded of our own, is found recorded in Paul's Letter to the Romans, the Sixth Chapter:

ESV **Romans 6:1-11** *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ 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. ⁵ ¶ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

So far the very words of our God. What comfort is inspired by the knowledge that these words are true and right in every regard, and therefore worthy of our intense study and meditation. That we might gain the full benefit of these words through our study this morning, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth."** Amen.

You and I had a problem. The problem, according to our text, was that mankind was **"enslaved to sin."** Hell is the only possible destination for anyone enslaved by sin, so our condition absolutely qualified not just as "bad," but as intolerably bad – the worst kind of bad. Not only was mankind enslaved to sin (and therefore existing in unbelief) we had no understanding of the problem and therefore no will to resist. The worst of all worlds. We were enslaved to sin, headed for hell, didn't care, and couldn't do anything about it even if we did. *That's* a problem.

God knew that he himself had to act if mankind had any hope for survival. He acted by sending Jesus. Then, knowing as he did that man couldn't even do his part to accept Jesus as their Savior and live, he gave us that simple and yet incredibly powerful gift called baptism. God himself promised to work faith in the human heart when we applied simple water and connected it to God's Word. God in effect told man, *"You don't have to understand how this works, just do it."* This absolutely changed everything. Satan didn't have a chance.

Yet Satan knows he has nothing to lose. He is damned. The sole purpose of his existence is to destroy anything and everything that God loves. That means us, and unfortunately the devil has also figured out the power of "Just Do It." When God established baptism, first with

John the Baptist and later with all of the New Testament disciples, he gave to the Church a most formidable weapon. Again, how simple, and yet how powerfully complex was this great gift to mankind. Through this gift amazing things could be accomplished – spectacular, supernatural wonders. Souls could be rescued from their **enslavement to sin** and placed instead on the shining path of life eternal. When God gave such a simple and powerful weapon to mankind, the depths of hell itself must have been shaken by the raw power and potency of this simple sacrament. Surely baptism, powered by the Word of God, would rescue virtually every human soul from their enslavement to sin and Satan.

How then is it possible that such a powerful, life-changing tool has fallen into such disrepair? How is it possible that something so great, so powerful, so wonderful has been more or less discarded as an outdated religious relic by our modern society? We ought not be surprised. The devil will spare no effort in his quest to destroy. We should have known that he would hurl himself against this great weapon, this humble miracle of baptism, with all of his considerable fury, wrath and cunning.

And hurl himself he did. What is more, his success has been nothing short of appalling. Where God intended the sacrament to be a pure and powerful working of the gospel, Satan has succeeded in convincing those both inside and outside of the Christian Church of everything *but* the truth. Countless millions now regard baptism as a good work that man does to earn a spiritual benefit – just another obligation or legal requirement (law) that man must fulfill before he can be considered worthy of heaven in the eyes of his God. Others regard it as a quaint throwback to a bygone era, of no real practical value or purpose. And those are just the attacks from within the Church. The world condescendingly dismisses Christian baptism altogether as mythology for the simple-minded – a cute little custom with all the efficacy and power of four leaf clovers and dream catchers. Maybe even less.

Baptism, as God himself describes it in his Holy Word, is **"the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."** Because of the Word of God connected to the simple water, Baptism represents a power beyond the comprehension of mortal man. Its very simplicity, however, belies its great effectiveness. This too ought not surprise us. Mankind has always rejected God's simple solutions to even our most debilitating problems – beginning with the gospel itself.

This is certainly part of the devil's strategy. If he can convince mankind that the gospel is too childish to actually work, he will have succeeded in persuading man to slam shut and deadbolt the only door to paradise. The

fact is the gospel in general, and baptism in particular, *are* that simple. God himself is complex beyond our comprehension or imagination, but not so with the plan he established for our salvation. That plan is simple. Though we rebelled against him by sinning, he sent his only Son to pay our spiritual debt – our *sin* debt. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, paid our debt by first becoming man, then living a perfectly sinless life, and finally by giving that life as a blood sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. God the Father accepted that gift as payment in full for all sins, and he credits that payment to each of us. The credit becomes our personal own the moment the Holy Spirit works saving faith in our hearts. Believing that Jesus has indeed paid for your sins, forgiveness and salvation are yours, fully and completely.

That is where baptism comes into the picture. The Holy Spirit creates such faith through baptism. Though exactly *how* God works the miracle of faith in the human heart is beyond our comprehension, it is enough for us to know that he does, in fact, create such faith. That, again, is why when God tells us to do something that will benefit us, we just do it.

Jesus' baptism was different. It raises questions. If, for example, we regard baptism as a means whereby the Holy Spirit creates saving faith in the heart of man, why was Jesus baptized? He already believed. If we now rightly regard baptism as the tool designed to cleanse us, personally, from our sins, why again was Jesus baptized? He had no sin. If, finally, we now rightly regard baptism as a gracious invitation on the part of our God to participate, through faith, in his kingdom of Grace (rather than a command that has to be fulfilled or obeyed by man) then, again, why was Jesus baptized? Jesus had faith, but he didn't need faith to save himself. He earned eternal Life, both for himself and for us, through his actions. Since baptism was not one of those legal requirements, again, why was Jesus baptized?

Jesus' baptism was, first, an anointing by which he officially entered his offices as prophet, priest, and king. It was God the Father's verification that Jesus was, in fact, the promised one, the *Christ*. (The name *Christ*, remember means, "*the anointed one*.") So it was that God added both the visible and audible proof at the time of Jesus' anointing in baptism. Jesus' baptism also served as an *association* – a statement by Jesus of his connection to all human beings. In Galatians 4:4-5 we read, **"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."** It is a

great and humbling mystery that Jesus, himself God from all eternity, made himself one of us. The One who had no sin, had come to stand by our side and to take our sin upon himself. Jesus' baptism represented a *beginning* – the beginning of his public ministry. God himself chose 30 years of age as the point at which his servants officially began their ministries (Numbers 4). Jesus too was thirty years old when he was baptized, and this event clearly marks the beginning of his public ministry. Lastly, Jesus in his baptism **"fulfilled all righteous"** – just as he was also circumcised and ceremonially cleansed earlier in his life. In short, he fulfilled every single aspect of life that pleased God the Father. And he did so for you and me, as our Savior and Substitute. In so doing, he also left us an example.

Jesus didn't need to be cleaned or converted, but we did. Through every aspect of his life, he provided us with the perfect path to follow. We don't have to understand the full benefit of everything he taught us; we just do it. And just here is where our text teaches us one more thing we should "just do" – make better use of our baptism, which was never intended to be a "fulfill it and forget it" ceremony.

Our text reminds us that Jesus rescued us when we were helpless, and for most he made us his own through the miraculous power of baptism. Remember that gift, that miracle that was performed in you. Not because you have to, but because it will help. Just do it. Our baptism is supposed to remind us that we have died to sin, having been freed from that which once enslaved us. From our text: **"We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."** Think about that. Not a little, a lot. Just do it, and trust that it will help. Our text also tells of God's intended result: **"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."** When you think about your own baptism and what your God did for you there, think also of the appropriate way to thank him – which is certainly not to return to that sin from which we have been freed and cleansed. It is to walk worthy of our calling by conducting ourselves as the sacred temples of our God that we now in fact are. Again from our text: **"So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."**

Thanks be to Jesus for doing all things perfectly, and for securing for each of us a share in his heaven – making that gift our own personal possession through our baptism. Will thinking about these things really benefit us? Our God is here inviting us, *"Just do it, and you will find out."* Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Isaiah 43:1-7** But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³ For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. ⁴ Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. ⁵ Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. ⁶ I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, ⁷ everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

^{ESV} **Luke 3:15-22** As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, ¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." ¹⁸ ¶ So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. ¹⁹ But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰ added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison. ²¹ ¶ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

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The First Sunday after Epiphany – January 13, 2019

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 301 (Red Hymnal)

"He that Believes and Is Baptized"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Isaiah 43:1-7) Our First Lesson applies obviously to Israel in the near-term, but ultimately to God's Son, Jesus Christ – who is the heart and soul of the entire Old Testament. The words also apply to God's children today, who are indeed precious in his sight.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 121 (Supplement Page 42)

The Second Lesson: (Luke 3:15-22) Our second lesson refers in passing to the event we commemorate on this Sunday – the baptism of Jesus. Clearly Jesus had no sin, therefore he was not baptized "for the remission of sins" – as we are today baptized. He left us rather with a perfect example, in every way. The fact that Jesus allowed himself to be baptized ought to teach us to treasure this gift, to avail ourselves of the divine power offered there, and to use our baptism as a source of comfort and assurance day by day.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – page 5. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 298 (Verses 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"Baptized into Thy Name Most Holy"

The Sermon – Text: Romans 6:1-11 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Just Do It"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Prayers of the Day, Followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 308 (Red Hymnal)

"Invited, Lord, by Boundless Grace"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Brown Hymnal page 17)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Brown Hymnal page 20)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 298 (Stanzas 5-6) (Red Hymnal)

"Baptized into Thy Name Most Holy"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (40) Average (38)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee hour
	-11:30 a.m.	– Outreach Committee Meeting
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee hour

CLC News – CLC Pastor Keven McKenney passed from this life on January 7 after prolonged health issues, including MS. He was 55 years old. A Delegate Conference paper has been assigned to a layman from St Paul, to be presented at the West Central Delegate Conference in Rapid City on May 28-30. The assigned topic is: "Communicating to our Congregations that They Are Part of a Larger Christian (synodical) Fellowship." We are looking for a volunteer to write and deliver this paper.

Care Packages – The Women's Fellowship is again accepting donations for care packages for our four members currently attending school away from home. Those contributing are asked to bring quantities that can be divided into four care packages. The deadline (and final "assembly" date) is February 2. Please contact Sandy Roehl if you have any questions.

Trustee Coordinator – Our new Trustee Coordinator is Samuel Meyer. Two reminders in that regard. First, please direct all supply and maintenance related issues to him. Second, bear in mind that he is not called to perform all maintenance tasks but to coordinate their completion. Please also therefore consider volunteering to correct any issues that might come to your attention.