



S2.Lesson 24: Sacraments – Baptism

Middle School Lesson Plans

Supplies Needed: Journals; Handout; tv or laptop to show movie clip (movie clip link is available at rfour.org/curriculum.html); two sets of each letter of "SERPENT" printed out on a half-sheet of paper (already setup for you in the "Baptism Supply Doc"); masking tape to roll and put on the back of each half-sheet

OPENING PRAYER

TELL

- We're starting a new session this week, and, it is also our last session for the school year!
- This session is about the sacraments in the Protestant Church.
- In general, a sacrament is something considered to be sacred or have a special significance. In Christianity, it means a rite that is considered to have been established by Jesus Christ to bring grace (i.e. gifts of God) to those participating in or receiving it.
- There are two sacraments in the United Church of Christ. Baptism and Communion.
- Today, we'll be talking about Baptism.
- The first thing we're going to do is watch a movie clip from the Lion King that gets at the heart of what baptism is, even though Simba isn't actually baptized in this clip.

WATCH Lion King Video Clip

ASK

- Where does Simba's father (Mufasa) live? (In Simba)
- How does Simba see this? (in the reflection from the water)
- Mufasa talks to Simba in the video clip, he says "You have forgotten who you are and so you have forgotten me." What do you think that means?
- Simba later says that "The winds of change are coming." Do you think he's been affected by this interaction? If so, how?

TELL

- We're now going to read the story of Jesus' baptism.
- Look for similarities between Jesus' baptism and the movie clip we just watched.

READ MT 3:1-6;13-17

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ²"Repent, for the kingdom of God has come near." ³This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" ⁴Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and

wild honey. 5Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, 6and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

13Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. 14John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. 16And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Holy Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

ASK

- So what similarities did you see between the video and the scripture story? (baboon and John the Baptist have similar roles? A father speaks. Mufasa lives inside of Simba, just like God's Holy Spirit settles upon Jesus. The son is to resemble the father. Baptism is the start of Jesus' ministry and the start of Simba's reign as king. Other things?)
- In verse 2, what does John the Baptist tell the people to do? (Repent)
- What reason does John give for why the people should repent (Because the kingdom of God has come near)
- In verse 6, what do the people do to show their repentance? (they get baptized)
- So then what does Jesus do? (he gets baptized)
- Why do you think he gets baptized? (verse 15, Jesus says, its proper and fulfills righteousness – righteousness means "right with God" – another answer to ponder, though, is that Jesus is repenting...)
- After Jesus is baptized, what descends upon him? (God's Holy Spirit)
- If God's holy spirit was descending upon Jesus, does that mean it was in/upon Jesus already? Is God being redundant? Or going with the simplest explanation, does this mean that Jesus was *not* filled with God's Holy Spirit up to this point?
- What does the voice say? (this is my son, the beloved, with whom I am well-pleased)

TELL

- Baptism – baptismo (the Greek word for baptism) means to immerse, submerge or to wash/clean - what John the Baptist is doing is a new thing. Baptism was not something Israelites did as a religious activity. What they did do was go down to the river and "baptismo" their laundry.
- Before they are baptized though, John is calling the people to repent. The Greek word for repent is "metanoia." Metanoia means, simply, "To Turn Around." (We talked about this a number of classes back with Jonah helping Nineveh turn around/repent. We did the "Helium Stick" activity.)
- In verse 6, the people confess their sins during the baptism event. The word, "confess" means to openly admit to how you fell short or made a mistake.
- Sin = hamartia in Greek. It means to miss the mark. It's an archery term.
- In the Old Testament (originally written in Hebrew) the word for sin in Hebrew is khatta'ah (root: chata) which means to miss the way/path or go the wrong way.

- In English, there are two meanings of the word sin. Capital 'S' Sin and lower case 's' sins. Capital 'S' Sin is a state of being – a state of separation from God (which would happen if you went the wrong way).
- Lower case “sins” is the word often used to define the acts that happen when we live separated from God.

ASK

- According to this story, what appears to be the purpose of baptism? (acts as a symbol that the people can participate in, and allows them, with an action, to show that they want to be ready for, and participate in, the Kingdom of God – also, Jesus’ baptism shows us what being ready leads to: the receiving of God’s Holy Spirit)
- So that’s what the story says...now think about Sunday mornings when we have baptisms. What does it look like? (babies getting drops of water on their head)

TELL

- This is called infant baptism. It originates from the Catholic church way back when (800s or so) and was meant to reassure parents whose children died that their child was going to heaven.
- When the Church of England came into being by splitting from the Catholic Church, it kept infant baptism.
- Puritans/Pilgrims who came to Plymouth Rock founded the Congregational Church which is part of the UCC. That’s why we still have infant baptism to this day.
- But as we can see from the story, baptism isn’t about making sure babies or anyone else gets to heaven. It’s about preparing to participate in the Kingdom of God, which is in the here and now.
- When a baby is baptized at __(this church)__, there is a covenant that the congregation makes with the family. This is that covenant:
- *We, your fellow members in this family of faith, do join with you (the parents) in the covenant you make this day, full of promise and hope for your children. We recognize them as children of the church, and beloved gifts from God. We make our covenant to support you and work with you in watching over them and caring for their spiritual interests. So we will also work and pray for their ongoing spiritual awakening and growth as disciples of Jesus Christ, that they may continually experience the inward grace of the baptism they have this day received.*
- One of the ways this church _____ lives out that covenant is by providing Sunday School classes.
- This is a “blanket” covenant meaning that whoever comes in _____'s doors is welcome and invited to participate in Sunday School.
- Then, when you are Confirmed, this baptism covenant concludes, and as an individual, you make your own covenant with _____ as to how you are choosing to participate in the Kingdom of God.
- But for the moment, you don’t need to worry about Confirmation for a few more years.
- So as you can see, baptism in the New Testament and baptism today are two different things.
- Let's do an activity now to help highlight this difference.

EXPLAIN Activity

- OK, everyone is going to line up into teams of 4 to 6 students, shoulder to shoulder.

- Each group is going to receive 7 letters - each letter will be on a note card. (Letters to use: S-E-R-P-E-N-T)
- Please place one letter on a (palm out) hand. So that at least each person in the group has one letter on their palm-out hand.
- Now that we're all set, I'm going to say a word for the group(s) to spell.
- First one to spell it correctly wins the round.
- You'll spell the word by putting your hands with the letters on them in the right order (from left to right)

DO Activity

Words to spell out:

Present

Serpent

Resent

Enters

Tears

Repent

Steer

TELL

Just as baptism was one thing and the church made it another thing, and just like Simba didn't know he had Mufasa in him, so did our hands get all switched around. However, in the end, when we *repented*, by moving our hands around, then we were *steered* back onto the right course.

CLOSING PRAYER