

Baptisms & Discipleship

PASTOR MEGAN BERRY

MATTHEW 3:13-17

Sunday, January 11, 2026

“Baptisms & Discipleship” | Matthew 3:13-17 | Pastor Megan Berry

Today is a fun day in the life of the church where we remember not only Jesus’ baptism by John but our own baptisms and those whom we’ve baptized this past year. Baptisms are such a joyous occasion, often we baptize babies who have family within the congregation and it’s a great time for everyone to come together, to celebrate not only a new life in this world, but a new child of God to love and to nurture.

While I wasn’t very “churchy” growing up, the few times I saw a baptism, I absolutely loved it! The babies were always so cute, parents were nervous but the energy in the pews was palpable with excitement for this new little one to go through the same ritual many of us have been through. Everyone knew the baby would probably cry or fuss, that things might not go perfectly to plan, but none of that mattered.

What did matter was this joyous occasion to come together as a big family, to be witnesses to this great ritual together, and to celebrate the entire time even if the little one fussed or water got on the carpet.

What a beautiful representation of church right! People getting to be themselves, engaging in our time-honored rituals as their whole being, being welcomed in with celebration and excitement. Baptisms really are a wonderful snapshot of the life of the church.

Especially because if we dig a little deeper and look at some of our liturgy and what we are all called to during the sacrament of baptism, we get a further taste of what our calling as disciples of Christ look like.

During the sacrament of baptism, there are a few questions asked to either the parents of the one being baptized or to the one being baptized themselves if they are old enough to understand and answer for themselves. The congregation also asked a couple questions during the sacrament.

If you read connections this week, these may look familiar as I referenced them there as well:

- Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce all evil, which separate us from the love of God?
- Will you be Christ’s faithful disciples, obeying his word, and showing his love, to your life’s end?

- Do we, the people of Covenant Presbyterian Church, as part of the church universal, promise to pray for them? Do we promise to be faithful members of the body of Christ along with them? Do we promise to set examples of Christ-like living, by the grace of God?

In these questions, we are delving into the heart of being part of the body of Christ together, to being a church together. We are promising to lean on God's grace, to do our best to love one another, to be a faithful disciple of Christ and show his love to the world, to set a good example for one another and help each other out along the way.

And we don't come by this language accidentally. There are far too many scriptures I could point us to, but I'll focus on another passage from Matthew to keep on theme :)

If we turn for a moment to Matthew 10, we see that Jesus has called and gathered his 12 disciples, and at this point, he's giving them instructions for how to be disciples. This is the mission Jesus sends them out with...

“Proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick; raise the dead; cleanse those with skin diseases; cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.”

As the disciples are wondering what they are supposed to do, how they are supposed to be disciples, Jesus gives them very specific instructions, go out and proclaim the good news that the kingdom of heaven is near, go and help the sick, bring people back into the community by cleansing them, casting out demons, do so without expecting payment.

The expectations have been set, to talk about the good news of Jesus, to help those who need our help, to build community again for those who have been left out, to do all of this BECAUSE we are disciples of Christ and this is our call to love one another. NOT because we need to bring more warm bodies into the church to pay the bills, NOT because we need to earn our way into heaven, NOT because we need to prove we're the best church around. But because this is what Jesus has called us to, however easy or hard it may be.

And so we see this calling reflected in our baptism liturgy, in our questions that we answer faithfully and enthusiastically, saying yes to helping one another, saying yes to doing our best to follow Christ's call, saying yes to leading by example and teaching our youngest what this great calling is to be members of the body of Christ.

If our questions weren't enough, we also affirm this belief together after our newest member has been baptized with these words: “With joy and thanksgiving, we welcome you into the Church. We give thanks for you, for together we are the body of Christ, and we are all one in Christ. We promise to love, encourage, and support you, to share the Good News of the gospel with you, to help you learn the Word of God and the will of God, and to help you live as faithful Christians.”

We may not use the exact words of Jesus to the first 12 disciples, to cure the sick and cast out demons, but the heart of the message is still there all these years later. Go and do the incredibly beautiful hard work of loving one another, telling the good news to those around you, and helping be and build community for all of God's children.

So today, as you remember your baptism, as you go back home and think about the to-do list or get swamped with the joys of a new year, I hope you can take some time to remember our calling as disciples of Christ. To love one another, show God's love in this world, and be the church together.

Amen.