

Theoacademy

BEING PRESBYTERIAN
PREPARATION FOR ORDERED MINISTRY

Session 12: The Sacraments in Worship



Theocademy

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Getting started

Before watching the video, consider the following questions.

- How and when does your congregation celebrate baptism? The Lord's Supper?
- How would you reply if a friend asked you, "Why are baptism and communion called *sacraments*?"

During the video

As you watch the video, answer the following questions.

- Why are the sacraments called "signs and seals" of God's grace?
- What is the significance of the symbol of water within baptism?
- What does baptism mark in the life of a Christian?
- What does the Lord's Supper reveal about our relationship with Jesus?
- What is the significance of the symbols of wine and bread within communion?
- In what ways are the sacraments a "mystery?"

Baptism

As we examine the two means by which God's grace is bestowed upon us in a special way, we begin to notice the striking similarities between the two. Like Landon describes in the video, "God uses real, tangible things to prove to us that grace is real" – and the story of that grace plays out in the rhythm of death-to-life. We start with baptism, the "ritual of initiation and welcome" into the body of Christ.

Death

The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 6:3-4, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

- In what way(s) is baptism a symbol of death?

- What is it that we're dying to when we're baptized? Why do we have to die to it?

New life

But that death that we symbolize in baptism isn't the end of the story – in fact, it's not even close. We die to our old selves so that we can experience the "newness of life" that comes from a covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Our Book of Common Worship describes baptism this way:

Obeying the word of our Lord Jesus, and confident of his promises, we baptize those whom God has called. In baptism God claims us, and seals us to show that we belong to God. God frees us from sin and death, uniting us with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. By water and the Holy Spirit, we are made members of the church, the body of Christ, and joined to Christ's ministry of love, peace, and justice.

- In what ways does baptism give us a new way of *being, knowing, and doing*?

- Why is baptism a one-time event? Why don't we in the Reformed tradition "re-baptize" believers?
- The Apostle Paul also tells us in Galatians 3:27-28, "As many of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." How does baptism give us a new corporate identity in addition to our new individual one?

Lord's Supper

Death

During worship, as the congregation prepares itself to receive the elements the pastor recites the following "words of institution:"

The Lord Jesus, on the night before he died, took bread, and after giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."
In the same way he took the cup, saying: "This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me."

- Whose death are we "remembering" with this sacrament? Why do we need to remember it?
- In the communion liturgy, right before we receive the elements, we proclaim "Hosanna in the highest!" Why is this death something we *celebrate*?

Sustained life

But just like with baptism, death isn't the end of the story with communion. Baptism identifies our death-to-life with Christ's death-to-life, with all the "rights and benefits thereunto."

- What is this "new covenant" that Jesus is talking about? What "old" covenant does it replace?

- Jesus tells his disciples, "*as often* as you do this, remember me." We've talked about the fact that baptism is a one-time event – why do you think we're supposed to repeat the Lord's Supper "often?"

- How do the symbols of bread and wine play into this idea of sustained new life?

Personal reflection

After the session, complete the following statements.

- My own life reflects Christ's death-to-life in the following way:

- I celebrate my new life in Christ by: