

## **SERMON TITLE: Victorious in Baptism (Mar. 8/26)**

Good morning! My name is Jon; I get to serve as the youth and worship pastor here at the church. It is a joy and a privilege to open up God's Word with you today.

We are continuing our **2026 Vision Series, Victorious**, and today, we get to learn all about **Victorious Baptism**: specifically water baptism. **What is** water baptism? **Why** water baptism? **Am I ready** to get baptized? We're going to cover all of that...but first, let's pray...

### **PRAY**

#### **OPENING – How the baptism class came about**

Late last year, the youth group and I started going through the Gospel of Matthew verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter. And Pastor Gerry had the wise suggestion, "When you get to **Matthew 3**, where Jesus is baptized, make sure you talk about water baptism." So we got to that chapter, and I started writing a **small section** about baptism...then that **small section** grew into a **bigger section**...and I realized, "Man, I'm gonna need a **whole separate youth night** or something else to cover all this."

Fast forward to the end of February a few weeks ago. And I told Pastor Gerry, "That youth group study for **Matthew 3** kind of **mushroomed off** into a baptism class. Would it be ok if we host a **baptism class** after church some Sunday?" And then PG said, "Well, why not try it as a Sunday

morning teaching in March...**and then schedule baptisms for Easter Sunday in April?**

One thing led to another, and here we are! God willing, ***we will have water baptisms on Easter Sunday***, and for today, we'll be learning about **Victorious Baptism**. **PARENTS:** If you've got kids in kids' church who have been talking to you about getting baptized, this handout covers a lot of what we'll be talking about today. I encourage you to take one of these home with you, ***pray through this and go over it*** with your kiddos.

For ***anybody*** who wants to join us in the water on **April 5**, you can sign up through the **QR code** on the back.

### **TENSION – Why a “baptism class” on Sunday morning?**

To start, I want to address the tension of “***Why a ‘baptism class’ on a Sunday morning?***... ***\*pause\**** ... ‘Cause you might be going, “Look Jon, most of us got baptized a long time ago.

- “Took the class...”
- “Got wet...”
- “***Why revisit something that we already took care of?***”

### **3 reasons why Baptism is so important for all Christians to revisit:**

- 1) Baptism is an ordinance of the church.

An ordinance is a “public, normative mandate” that Jesus Christ expects His church to participate in. The Bible teaches that Jesus has given the church **two ordinances**: *water baptism* and *communion*, which we did last week.

***An ordinance is different from a command.*** A command is about obeying Jesus on an *individual* level. (“Love the Lord your God, love your neighbor, pray like this, not like that...”)...

...but an ordinance is different. This is about obeying Jesus on not just an *private individual* level, but a ***public community*** level.

We get the ordinance of baptism from **Matthew 28:18-20**:

<sup>18</sup> Jesus came and told His disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, ***baptizing*** them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

According to Jesus, when it comes to baptism...

- This is not up for debate.
- This is not a matter of ***opinion/preference***, like ***music styles***, ***clothing styles***, or ***other areas*** where we can have some ***give-and-take***.
- Baptism is an ordinance that should be ***normative***.

Second reason to revisit baptism:

## 2) Baptism compels us to focus on mission.

In **Revelation 2**, Jesus addresses a local church in the city of **Ephesus**:

<sup>3a</sup> “I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance... <sup>4</sup> “But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love Me or each other as you did at first!”

In other words, “You’ve got some **great things** going on, there’s **a whole lot to like**; **but you’ve lost your first love**. You’ve **forgotten** what **brought you together** and **fired you up** in the first place.”

**That first love is easier to lose than we realize.**

- If we’re not **careful** as a church
- ...we can get **so caught up** in the day-to-day maintenance of ***politics, preferences, pet projects*** and ***potlucks***...
- ...that **the baptism tank starts to go dry**...
- ...and the ***Gospel of Jesus*** gets ***downgraded*** to **old nostalgia** instead of **urgent priority**.

***When we revisit baptism, baptism keeps us locked in on that first love.*** It compels us to **love** the One who saved us and to **focus** on His mission.

### 3) Baptism symbolizes our victory in Jesus.

When the **United States** defeated **Canada** in men and women's Olympic Hockey, everybody was talking about that gold medal (much to my dismay). Why did the gold medal generate all that excitement? ***The gold medal symbolizes victory. Every human is personally touched by victory.***

When you experience a **victory—financial breakthrough**, an **answer to prayer**, new **job**, or new **baby—that victory affects your whole life.** ***You can't help but talk about it...because of how significant that victory is.***

***For Christians, baptism is like a gold medal that symbolizes the victory Jesus has earned for us. We did not earn that victory; but Jesus earned it for us, and He invites us to celebrate & participate in that victory.***

So over these next few moments, as we talk about baptism, ***get excited!***

Don't **relegate** baptism to something that happened "*long, long ago in a galaxy far away*"...but **allow baptism to remind you of the victory you have right now in Jesus.**

And not only **your** victory...but let baptism fire you up about the victory that ***Jesus wants to give to others – your prodigal child, your lost family member, your atheist coworker. Wouldn't it be awesome to have them in the water with us on Easter?*** The victory that Jesus gave to you, He

still wants to give to others today! ***Come ON somebody!!!!***

**TRANSITION: From addressing the “baptized” to the “unbaptized”**

So now that I’ve addressed those of you who have been baptized, at this point, I want to devote the ***rest of this message*** to those of you who have not been baptized yet...

***Let’s be real.*** If you ***didn’t grow up in church***, or if you’ve ***never had the opportunity*** to really learn about baptism, baptism can be ***very intimidating***. “Man, I’ve got to ***say words publicly, get wet in front of people, go underwater***...that’s kind of ***weird***...***what’s this ‘baptism’ thing all about anyway?***”

So before anybody gets ***weirded out*** by baptism... I want to give you **3 Honest Facts** to better explain baptism and make it “***un-weird***” ...  
(Dragnet: “Just the facts!”)

**Fact #1 – Baptism is NOT a personal ritual that saves you...but Baptism IS a public visual of already being saved.**

Some churches teach that you can’t get to heaven without being water baptized, and that baptism is this magical ceremony that makes you “good enough” to be saved.

***But the truth is, you and I cannot get to heaven by just by being “good enough”***; instead, we need to believe that ***Jesus’*** goodness is “good enough”, and trusting in His ***enough-ness*** is what saves us.

## ILLUSTRATION: DROWNING IN A STORM

Imagine with me that you are a **swimmer drowning in a stormy sea**, and the **coastguard** throws a **rope and life ring** out to you.

You will **not** escape drowning just by telling the coastguard, "***I am enough!*** ***I'm baptized!*** ***I don't need that life ring!*** ***I can swim out this storm on my own!***" The **only way** to be saved from death is to **trust the coastguard**, **let go of your ego**, and **hold on tight** to that rope and life ring.

***It's the same thing with trusting Jesus to save us.***

## THIEF ON THE CROSS

When Jesus was dying on the cross (in **Luke 23:32-43**), there were two criminals being crucified on other crosses next to Him. **Matthew** records that both criminals started out trashing Jesus, but then **Luke** mentions that one of them had a change of heart and said, "Hey Jesus, I've been a really sinful person... I've got nothing to offer. You're perfect, I'm not; You don't deserve to be here, I do. ***Please remember me*** when You come into Your kingdom." (i.e. "Jesus, ***please save me!***")

At that point, it's ***obviously way too late to get baptized***...but even in that moment, Jesus looks at this dying thief, puts his fears at ease, and says, "I assure you, today you will be with Me in Paradise. You're good! You're covered! You are saved!"

Baptism is not a personal ritual that saves you, but baptism is a public visual of already being saved and trusting in Jesus.

### **SINFUL NATURE / (OS/Software example)**

The Bible says that all of us are born with something called a “***sinful self***”, or “***sinful nature***”. I like to think of this as “**sin software**.”

If you have a ***computer*** or ***smartphone***, that device runs on a software or operating system. (Windows, Mac, Android, iOS) Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, all of us are born with a “***sin software/OS***” that separates us from God.

But when we ***trust*** in Jesus and ***surrender*** our lives to Him, ***Jesus gives us brand new “software”***. That ***old “sin OS” gets deleted*** (the old self dies and is buried), and the ***brand new “Jesus OS” gets installed*** (the new life that Jesus invites us to live in).

Let’s read about it in **Romans 6:4-8 (NLT)**:

**4** For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now [because of that power] we also may live new lives. **5** Since we have been united with Him in His death, we will also be raised to life as He was.

<sup>6</sup>We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. <sup>7</sup>For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. <sup>8</sup>And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with Him.

So with water baptism, baptism is just declaring on the outside what Jesus has ***already done*** on the inside.

### **WHY WE BAPTIZE HOW WE DO (PICTURE OF BURIAL)**

This is why we baptize in the specific way we do. Have you ever wondered why we baptize people by ***laying them down*** in the water? We don't just ***dunk them from behind*** or ***pick them up and toss them*** into the tank?

***That "laying down" motion symbolizes burial. It's a public visual of what Jesus did for you—your ***old self*** getting ***buried*** in the grave symbolically, and your ***new self*** being **raised** to life in Christ.***

Baptism is not a personal ritual that saves you; but it is a public visual of already being saved.

**Fact #2 – Baptism is NOT a promise to be perfect ... But it IS a promise to look to the perfect Savior.**

I remember when I got baptized at age 11, and for a few days after, I was walking around the house with a halo on my head thinking that I was going to be perfect the rest of my life.

Then the day came where I **sinned**; I **chose** to do something wrong that I **knew** was wrong, and **Satan started to play head games with me after that**. “You idiot! You got baptized! You told everybody in church that you were going to follow Jesus. Look what you’ve done *now*... You’re not supposed to do *that*... You don’t reaaaaaalllly love Jesus; you’re a loser! You’re a failure!”

***Here’s what the Bible says about that kind of experience...***

The old sinful self that **Romans 6** talks about...the old OS that got “crucified with Jesus and buried with Him”...**Romans 7** makes it clear that ***that old sinful nature is always trying to come back. I heard somebody say one time that our old nature is like a “zombie”...always trying to come back to life and regain control.***

And until we get to heaven, where there is **no sin**, and **no brokenness**, ***you and I will always have to watch out for that old zombie nature.*** Doesn’t matter **how old** you are, **how long** you’ve been in church...

***All of us will sin—baptized or not.***

And **when** we sin...there are **two possible responses** we can have:

- 1) We can **feel sorry** for ourselves, **beat ourselves up**, **fall for Satan’s lies**, and **leave Jesus out** of the picture...

2) We can ***look to Jesus***, take ***ownership*** of our sin, and ***trust*** that ***His grace*** and ***His forgiveness*** are ***bigger, greater, and stronger*** than whatever ***shame*** we're battling with.

***That moment of looking to Jesus is what will give us power to move forward.***

## **TRANSITION TO LAST FACT**

Let's recap right quick...

**Fact 1 – Baptism is NOT a personal ritual, but it IS a public visual...**

**Fact 2 – Baptism is NOT a promise to be perfect, but it IS a promise to look to the perfect Savior...**

And Fact #3...

**Fact #3 – Baptism is NOT a guilt trip...but baptism IS an important next step.**

## **ILLUSTRATION: REAL ID**

Here in my wallet, I have a REAL ID Driver's License from the State of North Carolina (obviously ***not this*** one!).

Now this Driver's License card is a big deal...

- I'm not allowed to drive without it...
- I need this for **insurance**, **traveling**, **financial** stuff, **medical** stuff...
- So this is not just like a "junk mail" credit card that I can toss in the trash and not care about at all.
- ***The weight behind this card is very serious.***

But even though my Driver's License is a big deal...***imagine if the seriousness of this license caused me to feel guilty, ashamed, and paranoid every time I got behind the wheel.***

- You get on 64, and it's like... "Boy, I hope I don't get pulled over today."
- "I see a state trooper in his Charger right there; I'd better go 10 under the limit just to be safe."
- Or, if imagine if I was still a **teenager**...and I thought... "Maybe I should just **not get** my license at all; it's **too scary**. **Too overwhelming**. I think I'll just **walk** and **Uber** the rest of my life."

**Can you imagine living like that?**

As serious as this license is, ***the purpose behind the license is not about fear; it's about freedom.***

When I got my license at 17, it was like:

- “Wow, I’ve got my license...now I’ve got **freedom** to drive wherever I need to.”
- “Now I can **learn** where all the roads are, and **build up** my driving skills, and **become a better driver** day by day.”
- “And **whether my car works or not**, whether I’m **feeling happy or sad**, the **circumstances around me** and the **feelings within me** **have no power** to **take my license away**, so long as I don’t give them that power.”

## MODERN APPLICATION

Some of those hangups that I mentioned with the license (it’s too scary, it’s too big)...**people can have those same kinds of hangups about being baptized.**

- “I’m not **perfect enough**...”
- “I don’t **understand enough** about God...”
- “I don’t always **feel close** to God.”

### **Newsflash! Neither do I!**

- I’m **far** from perfect; I **struggle** with my sinful self **every day**.
- I **don’t** always **understand** God, or **what He’s like**, or **what He’s up to**.
- I don’t always “**feel close**” to God on an strictly emotional level.
- **If I waited until I felt good enough or spiritual enough to follow Jesus, I’d never follow Him again.**

***But none of those circumstances and none of those feelings can ever take away the reality that when I was 6 years old, I chose to trust in Jesus Christ and receive Him as my Lord and Savior...***

- So that no matter what I'm ***feeling***...
- No matter what I'm ***going through***...

***As long as I keep looking to Jesus, and keep my heart tender towards Him—I know that I know that I know that one decision at 6 years old was enough for Jesus Christ to save me.***

And ***that*** was why at ***11 years old***, I chose to take a ***next step*** and ***declare*** my faith in Jesus ***publicly*** through being ***baptized***.

That was a public declaration that:

- ***Jesus*** has saved me...
- I ***belong*** to Him...
- And ***even though I'm not going to be perfect*** in my relationship with Jesus...
- I want to ***keep growing*** in Him, ***keep building relationship*** with Him, and ***keep discovering more*** about who Jesus is and what He has for me to do.

***That's not just my own experience either; that's actually a principle from the Bible.***

## BIBLICAL APPLICATION

*All over the New Testament, the invitation to follow Jesus and the instruction to get baptized are almost always connected.*

- Again, Jesus said in **Matthew 28:19b**: "...Go and make disciples...baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Get them to **follow**, and get them **baptized**.
- All over the book of **Acts**, when people made a decision to follow Jesus, the **very next step** was getting baptized in water.
- **Paul** got baptized right away (**Acts 9:18**); a guy named **Cornelius** got baptized right away (**Acts 10:48**); there was even a time in **Acts 2** when **3,000** people all got saved and baptized in one day.

*In sharing those examples, the Bible makes it clear that when you get baptized—when you obey Jesus and take that next step with Him—something does get unlocked. It's like your spiritual driver's license.*

You don't **need** your driver's **license** to be **saved**...**but that license unlocks a lot of opportunities for you**.

You don't *need baptism* to be *saved...but baptism is a big next step for new growth, new depth, and new discovery in your relationship with *Jesus*.*

## TRANSITION TO "AM I READY?"

So far:

- We've talked about why to revisit baptism...
- We've looked at what baptism is and is not...

And now there's just one more question to address:

## AM I READY FOR BAPTISM?

*\*pause\** Let's answer that with **4 Heart Checks** to help you figure out if you're ready for baptism.

**Heart Check #1 – Do NOT get baptized out of fear, guilt, or pressure....  
But DO get baptized out of your own choice, passion, and internal desire to obey Jesus.**

I want to be *so careful* with this. As much as baptism is a command...we need to approach that command with *encouragement* instead of *pressure*.

- **Pressure** is about **condemnation**: “Get baptized or else!”
- **Encouragement** is about **inspiration**: “Hey, the Bible says that baptism is a big next-step of obeying Jesus; and I would love to pray with you and process with you about what that next step could look like.”

**If any part of baptism is motivated by fear, guilt, or pressure, instead of encouragement...you're not ready.**

If this is just to:

- Make a **family member** happy
- To make the **church** happy
- Or to “**score points with God**” and **check off that box** like some kind of transaction

... **you're not ready.**

**But on the flip side**, if you **genuinely desire** to take that next step with Jesus...

- If this is something that you want **for your own self**,
- From **your own motivation**,
- And from **your own, intentional relationship** with God...

Then hey, I think you're ready.

**Heart Check #2 – Do NOT get baptized...for fun, for attention, or “just because”. But DO get baptized...out of costly obedience to follow Jesus.**

Going back to the driver’s license analogy...

If you have a careless attitude toward driving, and if you don’t *recognize* the consequences that your driving could have on *you*, your *passengers*, and *other drivers* on the road...then *you’re not ready* for that license.

I think there’s a similar caution with baptism.

- If this is just for *likes* on social media...
- Or because *all your friends* are doing it...
- And it’s a *good time* of getting wet...

If baptism does not carry *some degree* of heaviness / weight for you...  
...then you are not ready. **This is NOT a game.**

**But if you realize that following Jesus is not a game, but a costly commitment...**

- ...and if you can approach this with an *appropriate level of weight*...
- ...where you’re not *scared* of baptism, but you’re not *being foolish* with it...

...then I think you are ready.

**Heart Check #3 – Do NOT get baptized...if you are not 100% clear on your relationship with Jesus. But DO get baptized...if you can biblically “define the relationship” that you have with Jesus.**

Every time a person gets baptized, the baptizer will ask the person the same two questions: “**Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins?**”  
“**Do you want to love Jesus and follow Him with all of your heart?**”

***If you cannot answer those questions with a 100% resounding yes, you are not ready.***

***And that’s not necessarily a bad thing:***

- Maybe there are some **questions** that you and God need to sort out first.
- Maybe there are some **areas of relationship** with Jesus that need to **mature** or **solidify**...kind of like **cement** that needs to harden and **stabilize** before you can **build** on it.

***However...***

- ...if you **can recognize the full significance** of the relationship that Jesus wants to have with you...
- And if you’re willing to **embrace that relationship wholeheartedly**, no matter the cost...You’re ready.

That leads to the last heart check:

**Heart Check #4 – Do NOT get baptized...if relationship with Jesus is optional or unimportant. But DO get baptized...if you want relationship with Jesus to be the central priority of your life.**

Listen to what Jesus says in **Matthew 16:24-26 (NLT)**:

<sup>24b</sup> “If any of you wants to be My follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow Me. <sup>25</sup> If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for My sake, you will save it. <sup>26</sup> And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?”

**\*pause\*** In other words, Jesus is saying, “***You’re either all-out or all-in.***”

- If following Jesus is something that has ***zero impact*** on your day-to-day life...
- If you’re asking yourself, “***How close to the edge of sin can I get without going over?***”
- Or “***How much of Jesus can I cut back out on without ending up in hell?***”

***Those are the wrong questions...***

***...and you’re not ready to get baptized.***

But if you **can** respond to those words of Jesus from **Matthew 16**...and if you **are** willing to give up:

- Your ***agenda*** for His agenda...
- Your ***priorities*** for His priorities...
- Your ***comfort*** for His ***calling***...

If you can take that dive—it's worth it. You're ready.

## CONCLUSION

***Maybe you've been hearing all these words about baptism...and it's forcing you to re-evaluate your own relationship with Jesus.***

- Maybe ***you don't have that relationship yet***, and you're not sure what that's like.
- Maybe you're saved, but ***you haven't been baptized***, and you sense the Holy Spirit ***gently compelling*** you to take this next step.
- Maybe you ***got baptized a long time ago***...but just like the church in Ephesus, ***that first love has gone cold***,
- and you wish you could experience that victory again...***rediscover*** a ***freshness*** and ***vitality*** with Jesus that you used to have, but haven't had for a long time.

***If that's you—this is your day to respond to God's voice and make things right.***

We're going to close with that song, "**Jesus be the Name.**" ***And if you need to get real with God at this altar***—either for the first time, or the first time in a long time—***don't put it off.***

- Don't worry about the ***people around you.***
- Don't get distracted with your ***lunch plans*** or ***other concerns...***
- Right now this is about you and Jesus having a moment to get real with one another.

***Jesus is offering you His victory; will you take time to receive that victory today?***

**DISCLAIMER:** This manuscript was written and preached by Jon Engler for the weekend of March 8, 2026 at EAG Church in Rocky Mount, NC. This manuscript has been published online for reflection and deeper study. The reproduction and/or distribution of this manuscript, either in part or in full, without the author's express written consent, is strictly forbidden.