

Baptized into Jesus' Death - Scripture text: Romans 6:1-11

(Sermon summary – June 04, 2023)

Today we will hear testimonies from seven baptismal candidates, explaining how they came to trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and what this means to them. Each of their stories is unique, but the God behind their stories is the same, calling all of us alike to repentance of our self-focused way of life, and to conversion from our brokenness to the only One who can liberate us from our idolatrous enslavements and make us whole. Biblical baptism is the testimony we give, before the church body and before the world, when we see that our sinfulness has been canceled by Christ's forgiveness and we are ready to commit ourselves to following Jesus with all our being. The apostle Paul describes it as being "baptized into Christ's death" — in other words, we are so identifying with Jesus and His sacrificial death for our sakes that this becomes the foundation of our self-understanding and of our worldview. We begin to grasp what it means to take up our own cross and die to our old self-centeredness, nailing it to the cross of Christ. We learn from Him that our true worth and purpose are experienced only by following in His footsteps, worshiping Him alone, serving the cause of His Gospel, loving our neighbor as He has loved us. All of this is truly possible because death was unable to hold onto Him, the Author of Life, so in His resurrection He offers us His own power as Lord of lords, enabling us to overcome in all of life's circumstances!

As we listen to these testimonies today, let us pray for each one of these young believers, that their decision to follow Jesus may be confirmed daily as they continue *learning from Him* through every trial and challenge. He will be not only their Lord and Master, but also their Yokemate, their Teacher and intimate Friend. His Spirit is the One who will help them experience the true transformation of their hearts and habits that comes from His Gospel. And they are now assuming their place among the company of witnesses in the Body of Christ that points to Jesus as the true Source of life and our only hope for salvation!