John 14:23-24

V23 “Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

What Jesus is saying is the expression of one’s love for Him, will be visible in a life of obedience.

That life will then enjoy the daily presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit… as God has now been welcomed in the life of the believer by faith.

And conversely, there will be a noticeable difference in the life of those who do not love Jesus, marked (He says) by an absence of obedience to God’s Word.

But even then, God’s unending love for the sinner continues to shine by His prevenient grace, so the prodigal will one day see the light, remember that God loves them, and come back home to Him.

God has led me to share these Scriptures so that those who may be visiting us this morning will understand the basis for Christian baptism and why these four beautiful souls have come for “dunkin”… and I don’t mean donuts!

The Bible teaches us that becoming a Christian involves something very personal.

It involves admitting the fact that we are sinners and as such, we are alienated from God…,

That we have been defeated in all of our attempts to reach God and to know God, in our own knowledge/strength.

And that God loves us and made ONE WAY for mankind to have a relationship with Him again… So we would not get confused…

Thru the saving work of Jesus, who lived a surrendered, sanctified (holy) life, submitting to the will/purpose of His Father by giving Himself to the cross…

reconciling us to God, doing away with our defeat, and giving us

His VICTORY in Jesus.

It also involves us counting the cost of what it will mean to admit our sin and believe in Christ.

Because it will mean:

* Saying no to myself and yes to following the Holy Spirit
* Saying no to my sin because it hurts God, others around me, my family & my life & witness.
* Saying no to a lifestyle of secrecy that tries to hide sin.

God makes us brand new creations, much better people, living much better lives, who begin setting a holy example, that makes the world a far better place for all.

When we invite Jesus in… and He and the Father take up residency in our lives… He leads us to…

* A surrendered heart & mind – Giving God full access. Like a plane or doctor.
* A sanctified heart & mind – Setting ourselves apart daily for God’s holy Spirit to do the perfecting work of holiness in our lives.
* A submissive heart & mind – Yielding ourselves to the good work of God that shines His light of grace through our lives.

Instead of living to represent ourselves, we now live as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe that since Jesus saw us as someone to die for…

That He is someone worth living for, and telling others about…

We are nobodies, telling everybody, about somebody who saved our soul.

So that is the summary version of what the New Testament teaches about what it means to become a Christian.

Once a Christian has been born, what do you have? A baby Christian.

John 3:3

A baby that needs to be fed the correct food of God’s Word to grow.

1 Peter 2:2

One of those commands given to us by the Lord Jesus, is to be baptized.

Therefore it’s important for us to understand that it is INCORRECT when people claim to believe in Jesus (asked Him to be their Lord & Savior),

but then for whatever reason (fear or confusion) decide that they will not obey this clear command to be baptized.

Matthew 28:19-20

* We are to preach the Word.
* We are to baptize and
* We are to teach and grow more followers of Christ who will obey God’s Word, and continue the process until the end of the age when He returns.

So since it is important for the church to baptize, it is equally important that the believers who are part of the church, be baptized.

So all of that should answer the first question that many have…

1. WHY DO WE BAPTIZE?
* Matthew 3:15-17

Jesus was baptized as an example for us. Since we love Jesus we obey His instruction and follow His example. He is Lord.

* If Jesus is the Sovereign Son of the living God, then I must do it.
* If Jesus is my Savior and Lord, and I am grateful for His love, mercy, grace, forgiveness and the NEW LIFE that He has died and risen for me to live, then I will want to do it.

Young Ashley has been BEGGING to be baptized!! That is a positive and healthy sign of a true Christian who has been taught the truth of Christ and now desires to follow Him in obedience.

What does God want to do thru you?

* Acts 2:37-41
* Acts 8:12
* Acts 9:18
* Acts 10 – Same with the Roman soldier Cornelius.
* Acts 16 – The same with Lydia down at the River.

 The Philippian Jailer.

These examples of Baptism also reveal the reason that we do not baptize infants…

All of those passages show us that baptism occurred a result of one hearing the Good News, choosing to receive God’s forgiveness, leaving their lifestyle of sin/disobedience behind, and living for Christ…

Since infants do not ordinarily possess the capacity to understand or make that choice…, we believe that God protects them by His grace until they reach the age of “moral accountability” when they can understand and choose Christ.

We do however believe strongly and encourage baby dedication.

Where Christian parents, along with the congregation they have committed themselves to…, dedicate themselves to work together to train the child in the way of the Lord, so that one day the child can believe, be baptized and live for Jesus.

1. WHAT DOES BAPTISM MEAN? It does NOT mean the washing away of sin…

There is nothing magical or mythical about this ICE COLD water!

This water cannot take care of our sin problem.

Nothing but the blood of Jesus (the sinless Son of God), can wash away our sin.

We can never become a Christian as a result of having someone do something externally to us (like baptism).

Baptism means

* A public confession of one’s personal faith in Christ.

Where people metaphorically die, they are placed in the grave and risen to NEW LIFE as Christ was.

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward, spiritual change. You once had no desire to obey the Word of God, or tell other about Him… but now you do.

If that is not the case with Ashley, Rod, Jake & Patrick today… Then baptism is nothing more than a free bath… minus the soap!

In a couple of minutes we will give them the opportunity to confess/tell you what their faith in Christ has meant so far… the changes they have already begun to see the Holy Spirit doing thru obedience to the Word of God.

* It is also an illustration of a great truth.

Paul clearly states that we are saved by grace thru faith alone… Ephesians 2:8

But Paul also knew that there were some who would turn that truth on it’s head and make it mean something that God never intended… that since I am saved by grace, therefore I can live whatever way I choose.

Romans 6:1-7

Sin is no longer your master!! Why would a person become one with Christ and then live unfaithfully to Him?

Why do we baptize? Jesus said to and we love Him.

What does it mean? A public confession of inward grace applied…

1. Baptism is a commitment to loyalty (like a marriage).

In the early days, people were baptized in rivers & lakes.

As they came up out of the water they would yell, “Jesus is Lord”…and they were now His loyal subjects.

So lets give them the opportunity to confess/tell you what their faith in Christ has meant so far… the changes they have already begun to see the Holy Spirit doing thru obedience to the Word of God.