

EVERYONE'S BAPTISM OUGHT TO SPLASH ON SOMEONE

John 12:11

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I'm going to show you a clip from a baptism at the First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas, a few months ago. I have permission from the pastor to share this video clip. As you watch the video, you might want to focus on the choir below the baptistry. Much like Sea World, First Baptist Church of Waco now has a designated "splash zone" – mostly, it looks like, the tenor section. The pastor said his custodial staff, who filled the baptistry, were apparently unfamiliar with Archimedes' principle of water displacement, also known in science classes as the principle of buoyancy. The principle states that an object submerged in a fluid experiences an upward force equal to the weight of the fluid it displaces. Archimedes' principle is a law of physics fundamental to fluid mechanics.

I think the congregation chuckled for quite a while after witnessing the baptism not only of the gentleman professing Christ but also the entire back row of the choir. If you're Matt Snowden, pastor of First Baptist Church of Waco, what do you say when you come out to preach? How do you recover the congregation enough to preach your sermon? Matt is quick witted and uttered what I think is a profound statement. He approached the pulpit and said to the snickering saints, "Everybody's baptism ought to splash on someone."

"Christians need to present Jesus," writes David Wilkinson in his book *The Message of Creation: Encountering the Lord of the Universe*. That ought to be obvious to us, but Jesus is often obscured by clever arguments or by questions about how and when we should share our faith. John Stott has often said that it is true that many people do not like the institutional church. But truly, very few people do not find Jesus both appealing and intriguing. So, if you are a Jesus-presenter (and you are if you are His follower, His disciple), your primary assigned task is to go fishing for folks for the kingdom of God. When was the last time you mentioned the word "Jesus" in conversation with anyone? (Jesus Presenters, homileticsonline.com)

Last week we explored the story of the resurrection of Lazarus (chapter 11), as Jesus called him back to life after he was already four days dead. In chapter 12, Jesus is back with his best friends in Bethany – Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary. Mary sacrificially anoints the feet of Jesus, wiping his feet with her hair. The house is filled with the fragrance of her sacrifice for her Lord.

Judas complains (v. 5), saying that they should be thinking about the poor, not pouring perfume on the feet of the rabbi. John tells us in v. 6 that Judas really didn't care about the poor; rather, he was a thief who was taking from the till.

Jesus rebukes Judas. “Leave her alone, so she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me” (v. 7-8).

Mary shows her humility by the fact that she’s not anointing the head of her Lord, but His feet. And when we are told that the fragrance of the ointment fills the house, John is not only describing the magnificence of the occasion but maybe, symbolically, the aroma of the knowledge of Christ will at once fill the whole world. (Rudolf Bultmann. *John*, 414-15)

One commentator says, “Mary’s indecorous devotion to Jesus seems to me a little ‘Pentecostal’ or ‘charismatic.’ Envision her stooped body, her cascading hair, and poured-out oil seeming the equivalent of gospel choruses rather than of classic hymns, of raised hands rather than of upstanding Presbyterian propriety, of emotion rather than reserve. This text teaches emotion-suspicious persons, ‘Have a heart! People are much more than emotional creatures, of course; but they are nothing less.’” (Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, p. 700)

A large crowd of Jews gathers in verse 9. Everybody was coming to see Jesus and, more importantly, to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. The chief priests, who were planning to put Jesus to death, were planning to murder Lazarus as well, because, on account of Lazarus (v. 11), “many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.”

Here in John 12, many Jews were believing in Jesus because of the testimony born in the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. Turn back to John 11:45. After Jesus commands Lazarus to come forth, look at verse 45: “Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Jesus.”

As we study John in this sermon series, notice there is a pattern. Everybody who comes to know Jesus reaches out to lead others to do the same. All the way back in the beginning (John 1), one of the two disciples of John the Baptist who followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. “He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah.’ And Andrew brought Peter to Jesus. Jesus looked at Peter and said, ‘You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas’ (or Peter)” (John 1:41-42).

You remember that story? John the Baptizer is with his disciples and when he saw Jesus, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” So two of his disciples leave John and begin to follow Jesus. They spent a day with Jesus. One of those two was named Andrew. And Andrew had a brother named Simon. The first thing Andrew did when he discovered that this rabbi Jesus was the Christ, the Lamb of God, he goes and finds his own brother Simon and says, “We’ve found Him. We have found the Christ.” And he brings his brother to Jesus. And Jesus gives Simon a new vision, a new purpose, and a new name.

Has God given you the same?

In the Gospel of John, finding Jesus means leading others to His side, as well.

Yet again in chapter 1, verse 43, the next day Jesus goes to Galilee. He finds Philip, and Jesus says to him, “Follow Me.” Philip (v. 45), in turn, found Nathanael, and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses wrote in the Law and also the Prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

But Nathanael is not so sure about Jesus (v. 46). “Can anything good be from Nazareth?” And Philip says, “Come and see.” And Nathanael, after his encounter with Jesus, declares, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”

Andrew meets Jesus, and he brings his brother, Simon Peter.

Philip meets Jesus, and, immediately, Philip finds Nathanael and said, “We have found Him.”

In verse 43, Jesus finds Philip, and in verse 45, Philip finds Nathanael. Jesus has already found you. Now, whom have you found for Him.

Oh, it's not just the men who preach the gospel in John. We have already looked in depth at the story in chapter 4 of Jesus meeting the woman at the well, the Samaritan. The lady encounters Jesus and His divine knowledge of all that she has done and all that she is. It is Jesus who said to her, “I am He; I am the Messiah.” Jesus offered to give her Living Water, the power and presence of God's Spirit. The woman leaves her water pot behind. She'd come to the well to draw water, but now, in her excitement at meeting the Messiah, forget the pot. She'd found the Living Water. And she said to the people, “Come see a man who told me all things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it? And they left the city and were coming to Jesus” (John 4:28-30).

And in 4:39, “From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me all the things that I have done.’”

This is true throughout the Gospel of John. Turn toward the end to chapter 20. Mary of Magdala comes to the tomb; it's still dark. The stone had already been rolled away. She runs to Simon Peter and John (the writer of our Gospel) and announces, “Someone has stolen the body of our Lord.” Peter and John race to the tomb. They see that Jesus has been resurrected. In fact, John believes (v. 8). And the two disciples make their way back to their homes.

Yet, Mary remains standing outside the tomb. And as she weeps, she sees two angels in white – one at the head and one at the feet of where Jesus' body had been lying. And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” “Because they have taken away my Lord. Someone stole His body. I don't know where they put His body.” When she said this, she turned around, and Jesus is standing there. She doesn't recognize Jesus; she thinks He is the gardener. Jesus asks her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” “Sir, if you've taken His body, just tell me where you've put Him. No questions asked. I'll go and get Him.”

Then Jesus called her name, “Mary.” And she shouts “Rabbi,” and grabs Him. And in John 20:18, then Mary Magdalene came to the disciples and announced, “I have seen the Lord, and He said these things to me.”

Mary met Jesus, the resurrected Jesus, just like you. And because of Mary, many people believed. Mary comes announcing, “I have seen the Lord,” and many people believed.

What are you announcing these days? And, because of you, who believes?

Michael Green did a classic study of evangelism in the early church. In other words, how did the believers in the earliest days of the church share Jesus? This is what the scholar observed. The early church “made the grace of God credible by a society of love and mutual care which astonished the pagans and was recognized as something entirely new. It lent persuasiveness to their claim that the new age had dawned in Christ.” (Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 1970)

What Green was saying is this: when everyone else was running *out* during the plagues and difficult days, the church was running *in*, caring for the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the needy. And the very power of their care, the care of the Christ, was testimony enough to lend credence to the story and the message of the Christ.

What are you doing, what are we doing to empower the message of the Christ by the witness of our love?

The old evangelist Sam Shoemaker, used to refer to long-established churches as “aquariums.” He would cite Jesus’ famous teaching about His disciples needing to be “fishers of men.” Then he would point out that many followers of Jesus, in long-established churches, are more like “keepers of the aquarium” than “fishers of people.”

The aquarium is a closed system. Oh, it’s a beautiful thing to look at; we’ve got one upstairs, if you’d like to get a gander. But in the aquarium, the fish just swim around in a very limited space. They enjoy one another’s company some days, and sometimes they are quarreling around the coral, pecking at each other. Far better than keeping the aquarium for the sake of the gospel is to be standing out over the open ocean, encountering newcomers that God has sent here.

How much of what you do, how much of what we do, is little more than a conversation within the aquarium versus going out and seeking new people for the Kingdom? (License-Plate Christianity, homileticonline.com)

I know there are a myriad of works about how to share Christ or how to do evangelism. All of them mean well, but unfortunately, many of them come down to some formulaic presentation of the gospel. And people who don’t know Jesus don’t want rote formulas; they want real relationships. Knowing Jesus is first and foremost about relationship.

ABC:

Admit you are a sinner. Romans 3:23 – “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Believe Jesus is the Son of God. John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

Confess Jesus as Lord. Romans 10:9 – “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

The first thing in sharing Christ is this:

I. Build relationships outside of church circles.

If everything you do is with and around First Baptist Church, you need to take on some new activities. The pastor of North Point Community (Andy Stanley) in Alpharetta, Georgia, says, “Our whole evangelism strategy is summed up in two words: invest and invite. Invest in relationships with unbelievers and, at the appropriate time, invite them to an environment where they can hear the gospel.” (Vital Church, homileticsonline.com)

Mike Nelson says, “I was interning at a Lutheran Church in north Minneapolis. I had the privilege of sharing an office with Bob Evans, a retired pastor who served our congregation as an “evangelism consultant.” One week, Bob Evans put an insert into the Sunday worship bulletin that simply stated, ‘Surveys show that the average Lutheran invites someone to church once every 14 years.’ At the bottom he asked the tongue-in-cheek question: ‘How many of you are past due?’” (Woo Wonder, homileticsonline.com)

That story is not about Lutherans; it is about us, too.

Andrew meets Jesus and immediately finds Peter and brings him to the Christ.

Jesus finds Philip and immediately Philip finds Nathanael and brings him to the Christ.

The woman at the well has a conversation with the Christ and discovers He knows everything she’s ever done. He offers her the presence of the Spirit in the Living Water of God. She forgets her water put and runs to the city and declares, “I’ve found the Messiah.”

Mary of Magdala encounters the resurrected Jesus, and she says, “I have seen the Lord, and He said these things.” And many people believed because of her.

The second thing I would say is

II. We must show genuine interest and the love of Christ.

It means we have to really care. People don’t care what you believe until they know you really care.

What does it mean to take up the Savior’s cross and follow Him? Fred Craddock says, “I think it means to be willing to empty your pockets for somebody else’s children. I think it means to treat as father and mother those who are not really your father and mother. I think it means to claim as brother and sister people to whom you are not kin. I think it means to reach out and touch untouchable people.... I think it means to sit at table with people who live far outside the tight social circle of some of your friends. Break bread together. It means to be a voice for moral values in a culture that will immediately accuse you of sinking into a bunch of moralistic

thinking. IT means to witness for Jesus Christ when evangelism is being laughed at everywhere. It means being an advocate, to speak the gospel as though something were at stake. ... I think it means that. (Fred Craddock, defining what it could mean to take up the Savior's cross and follow Him, at the Princeton Theological Seminary graduation in May 1989, homileticonline.com)

III. Tell your story.

Why do you have hope in this broken world? Our world is falling apart. The garments of this globe are unraveling, one thread after another. Wars and rumors of wars are at every turn. We've experienced a pandemic. We've gone through the most divisive presidential election perhaps in American history. No one looks for the middle-ground anymore – in any avenue of life, everyone runs to the extreme. Modern medicine that was supposed to save us all seems to be handcuffed by insurance and greed. Hardly a week goes by that we don't hear about a gunman downing innocent victims. And in all of that, why are we the people of hope?

Like the man in John 9, you know your own testimony. "I once was blind, but now I see."

IV. Patiently answer questions and never pressure anyone.

Trust the Spirit. I once shared the gospel with a well-known businessman in our community. He did not attend First Baptist Church before our meeting; he did not attend First Baptist Church after our meeting. But for some reason, he wanted to see me. He sat down in my office, and his life was on the brink of disaster. He was at a crossroads. I shared with him clearly and uncompromisingly the gospel story. I could tell he wasn't quite ready, and I said, "I'm not going to pressure you to do anything. All I can do is take you to the edge of the mountain; I can't make you take a leap of faith." I said, "And it's a big decision. It's not a decision to follow Christ just to get through this crisis. It's a decision to follow Christ, to give Him your life, to make Him your Lord, to make Him your priority, and in Him and in His church to find your purpose." He took it all in. I didn't minimize the decision. I told him quite frankly that Jesus never said jump on the bandwagon. He always said, "If you're going to follow me, you need to count the cost." I said a prayer for him. On this occasion, although sometimes I do, I could tell he wasn't ready; I didn't lead him to the Christ. He wasn't there yet.

Years passed. I was going across the parking lot of one of the big box stores, and a man started shouting, "I did it. I did it. I did it." I immediately recognized him and remembered our encounter from long before. "You did what?" I asked. He said, "You took me to the edge of the mountain, but I took the leap of faith. I did it, and Jesus is my Lord." That man has since died, and I'm grateful for that day when I was able to share the gospel. And after he found Jesus, he shared the gospel with a lot of people – a lot of people in prison became his passion.

Everybody's baptism ought to splash on someone. And your baptism is splashing on whom? When's the last time you brought up Jesus in the conversation? I know our present cultural condemnation on sharing your faith. But I'm not monitoring my behavior based upon cultural conditions. My conversation is guided by the Christ who says, "Go, and be fishers of men."

The church can never be silenced by those who do not want us to tell His story. When's the last time you invested and invited people to come to the Christ? To come join with His people at church?

There are some people in this congregation who do that so well. I sit in awe and learn from them. There are others of you who walk down the same roads, talk to the same people, and have so ignored the prompting of the Spirit to reach out and share your hope in the gospel that you are blind to the harvest God places at your feet.

Everybody's baptism ought to splash on somebody.