

MODULE 7

PREACHING THE BAPTIZED LIFE

ACTIVITY GUIDE



PREACH THE
WORD
It's *Still* All About
Jesus

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Introduction:

Greetings in Christ! I'm Reed Lessing and I serve as Senior Pastor at St. Michael Lutheran Church in Ft. Wayne, Ind. Prior to my service in Ft. Wayne, I was on the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis for 14 years.

This module is about preaching the baptized life — with equal emphasis on *baptized* and *life*. They go together, just like Adam and Eve, David and Jonathan, James and John, Peter and Paul. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (MARK 10:9). Baptized goes with life and life goes with baptized!

Baptized. Martin Luther writes in his Small Catechism that Baptism, “Works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare” (SC, The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 5–6). The Reformer writes in his Large Catechism, “Baptism is not a work that we do but is a treasure that God gives and faith grasps” (LC, 37). From his Large Catechism Luther also writes, “Now, here in baptism there is brought, free of charge, to every person’s door just such a treasure and medicine that swallows up death and keeps all people alive” (LC, 387).

Being baptized and the Christian life go hand in hand! In his Large Catechism Martin Luther writes, “In *baptism*, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and practice all his or her *life*” (LC, 41). Luther connects being baptized with the life of faith. It is the “present tense” of Baptism. He continues, “Thus, we must regard baptism and put it to use in such a way that we may say, ‘I am baptized!’” (LC, 44).

In this module, we will accent preaching about these baptismal motifs: identity, the forgiveness of sin, death and resurrection, new birth and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Churches and their leaders are tempted to pine after anything and everything other than the God-ordained means for congregational health. Paul instructed Timothy to “preach the Word in season and out of season” (2 TIM. 4:2). He did not exhort Timothy to throw himself into the latest marketing strategies, or the current ideas in personality theory, or best practices in leadership. Paul told Timothy, “Preach the Word. Devote yourself to these things. Let everyone see your progress” (1 TIM. 4:15).

So here we go — *preaching the baptized life!*

Phase 1:

TRIAD MEETING – OPENING REFLECTIONS ON PREACHING THE BAPTIZED LIFE

In the first meeting of the triad, you will watch the module’s video segments and work through the written module materials as you converse with one another about preaching the baptized life.

1.1 CONFESSION AND CHRISTOCENTRICITY:

A. General description: All topics related to preaching can be considered in terms of the heart and the art of preaching.

At the heart of Lutheran preaching lies the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. This section considers how preaching the baptized life relates to our Lutheran confession of what preaching is and to the preacher's proclamation of Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

In addition to the heart of preaching, there is also the art. The art of preaching attends to those things that, while not necessary, are helpful for preachers and for the people who hear God's Word. This section, therefore, also considers how preaching the baptized life relates to the art of preaching.

B. Module materials: This section of the module offers video segments and discussion prompts that consider preaching the baptized life by looking at theology, theory and a sample sermon.

Theology: Video segment 1 and group discussion

Watch the first video segment that offers theological reflections on preaching the baptized life. Then converse with one another about the segment. To guide your conversation, you may use these discussion prompts.

Discussion:

- 1) How frequently do you preach the baptized life?
- 2) "If you love the Gospel you must be opposed to the Law." What do you think?
- 3) "The Law always and only accuses." Do you agree?
- 4) How do you integrate the Third Use of the Law into your sermons?
- 5) What do Paul and Luther teach us about preaching the baptized life?

Theology: Video segment 2 and group discussion

Watch the second video segment, which offers homiletical theories on preaching the baptized life. Following the video segment, talk with each other about these theories. To guide your conversation, you may use the discussion prompts.

Discussion:

- 1) What do Caemmerer, Long and Chapell add to your understanding of preaching the baptized life?
- 2) What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses?
- 3) What do the sample sermons teach you?

Sample Sermon: Video segment 3 and group discussion

Having examined preaching the baptized life theologically and theoretically, this section will focus on developing your skills as a preacher in this area. In this section, you will find materials and exercises to develop and evaluate your competency in preaching the baptized life.

Background:

The following sermon was preached at St. Michael Lutheran Church in Ft. Wayne, Ind. by the Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing in December 2016. The text for the sermon was John 1:12b, "He gave the authority to become children of God."

Directions:

Watch the sample sermon and then talk with each other about preaching the baptized life. To guide your conversation, you may use these discussion prompts.
<https://youtu.be/gks6sMOKcaY>

Discussion:

- 1) Identify the goal, malady and means of this sermon.
- 2) State the sermon's focus and function.
- 3) What pitfalls does the sermon avoid?
- 4) How is the baptismal motif of adoption used?

1.2 COMPETENCY:

A. General description: Having examined preaching the baptized life theologically, theoretically and practically, the module will now focus on developing your skills as a preacher in this area. In this section you will view segments of several sermons, preached by LCMS pastors, and evaluate their competency in preaching the baptized life.

B. Module materials: Provided here are resources to help you evaluate and sharpen your intentional engagement of the biblical text for the sake of sacramental preaching.

Directions:

Watch the sermon segments and then talk with each other about preaching the baptized life. To guide your conversation, you may use these discussion prompts.

Discussion:

Watch the sermon segments and then talk with each other about preaching the baptized life. To guide your conversation, you may use these discussion prompts.

- 1) As we preach the baptized life the text may lead us to focus upon identity, the forgiveness of sin, adoption, death and resurrection, new birth and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) What aspects of the baptized life do these preachers emphasize?
- 3) What area do you emphasize most often?
- 4) What are the strengths and weaknesses of each sermon segment?

Justin Rossow: Baptism and the Gift of the Holy Spirit

One of the defining features about Jesus is that He is the Messiah, the Christ. That title — Messiah in Hebrew, Christ in Greek — simply means “The Anointed One.” Jesus is the promised Anointed One, the special representative of Yahweh who would receive and bear the very Spirit of God.

I like this [image of the Baptism of Jesus]¹ because it captures the descent of the Holy Spirit. Remember, when Jesus was anointed at His baptism, He was named the beloved Son of God, and the Spirit descended on Him like a dove. Jesus came to the waters where people were being baptized for repentance. Jesus stood in the place of

¹ The painting “Come Holy Spirit” featured in this video is copywritten under the ministry Painted Christ LLC and may not be used in any way without prior written consent. © Copyright 2019 Painted Christ LLC. For more information on booking Christian speed painter, Lance Brown, go to: PaintedChrist.com or facebook.com/paintedchrist.

sinner to fulfill all righteousness. And Jesus was declared the unique and beloved Son, who received the Holy Spirit and lived out the rest of His ministry carrying the special presence of that Spirit.

So, in the one sense, you are not like Jesus at all. He is the unique Christ of God, the anointed Messiah, God's one and only Son. But in another sense, precisely because Jesus stood in the place of sinners — because Jesus took *your* place, Jesus invites you to take *His* place. Because Jesus received and carried the Holy Spirit in a unique way, He became the one who was authorized to pour out the Spirit on all people, universally.

That's what's going on at Pentecost: Jesus himself, the Anointed One, the Anointed-with-the-Spirit One, is pouring out His Spirit on His followers. I love this Baptism image because it could be the Baptism of Jesus, with the descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove, or it could be Pentecost, with tongues of red fire dancing in the blowing of the Spirit wind.

It looks as if this person is almost inhaling or drinking deeply of the Spirit. It reminds me of what Paul would later write: "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."²

So, although Jesus was uniquely baptized as the unique Son of God who uniquely bears the Spirit, you have now also been baptized. You have been named beloved daughter, beloved son. The same Holy Spirit that filled Jesus at His Baptism now fills you. Today is Pentecost renewed again; every day, you walk in the power of your Baptism; every breath, you breathe the wind and Spirit of God; every moment you drink in life, you drink of the one Spirit that empowered the life of Jesus the Messiah.

This painting by Lance Brown is simply titled, "Come, Holy Spirit." It could be a picture of Jesus at His baptism; it could be a picture of the disciples at Pentecost; it could be a picture of you, today.

Jesus was anointed with the power of the Spirit. And so are you.

Watch the sermon, starting not at the beginning of the sermon but at the beginning of section A: youtu.be/pNS1NqMMiog?t=3m16s.

Peter Nafzger: Baptism as New Life

Peter is preaching about the Holy Spirit. In this section he contrasts the Holy Spirit with an evil unclean spirit.

There's another spirit who resides in you. He resides in me, too. This other spirit doesn't give in so easily. This is the old spirit. He clings, and he scrapes, and he claws, and he fights like hell to bring you down.

That spirit must die. Every day.

We talk a lot about remembering our baptism. Do you remember what we do right before we pour the water? We renounce. Do you renounce the devil? Yes, I renounce him. Do you renounce his works? Yes, I renounce them! Do you renounce his ways — and before you answer, I'm not talking about his ways out there in the world. I'm talking about his ways in here. The ways in which he twists us and turns us from beloved children of God into hateful and hurtful, mean-spirited people who don't look anything like who he's made us to be. Do you renounce his ways *in here*? YES! I RENOUNCE THEM!

Every day we remember. Every day we renounce. Every day we lean into our possession by the Spirit of our Lord Jesus. And every day we go forth in His gracious power.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/cs1718/124/>

² 1 Cor. 12:13.

Mark Surburg: Baptism as Death and Resurrection

Mark's sermon is based upon Romans 6:1–11:

Paul has told us two truths. He has told us that through Baptism we have shared in the saving death of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who will raise our bodies on the Last Day is already at work in us now — the power of Christ's resurrection is at work in our lives today. And he has told us that we also still have the flesh — the fallen sinful nature that is not yet completely gone and can still drag us down into sinful thoughts, words and deeds.

The question then for us as Christians is what we are going to do with these truths. Are we going to just excuse sin? Are we going to assume that falling in sin is just to be expected? That's not what the apostle thinks. He says, "So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (ROM. 6:12–14).

Paul says that by the Spirit we are to put to death the deeds of the body. Make no mistake. The inspired apostle acknowledges that there is a struggle. He doesn't deny that failure occurs. But he refuses to believe that falling into sin is always inevitable or unavoidable. And that is because the Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead is at work in you now.

Our life as Christians is, therefore, very simple. When we fall into sin we return in faith to our baptism, for there we have the assurance of forgiveness because of Jesus' death and resurrection. We view sin as something that we will need to struggle against. In faith we believe God's promise that through Baptism the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us so that we can put to death the sin present in us and instead live in faith toward God and love towards our neighbor.

Few people have understood this more profoundly than Martin Luther who wrote in the Large Catechism: "Therefore let all Christians regard their Baptism as the daily garment that they are to wear all the time. Every day they should be found in faith and with its fruits, suppressing the old creature and growing up in the new. If we want to be Christians, we must practice the work that makes us Christians, and let those who fall away return to it."

2.1 PREACHING AND RESPONSE:

FOR THE NEXT STEPS:

Determine among your triad the plans for viewing the sermons you will record in your congregations. Will they be viewed together at your next triad meeting or viewed by the pastors in advance? (Instructions for uploading sermons to the internet to facilitate viewing in advance are given in the following section.) Be sure the host site of the next meeting has everything you need.

Phase 2:

PASTORAL PRACTICE - PREACHING AND RESPONSE IN THE CONGREGATIONAL SETTING

After the first meeting of the triad, you will put what you have learned into practice in a sermon.

Each pastor will preach a sermon that uses what he has learned in this module and engage in some form of feedback with congregational members. The sermon will be recorded so that it can be uploaded and discussed in the second meeting of the triad.

2.1 PREACHING AND RESPONSE:

A. General description: Having learned about preaching the baptized life, you will now preach a sermon where you use what you have learned in a way that is appropriate for your congregation.

Since the sermon will also be used in the next meeting of the triad, you will want to make provisions for recording the sermon so that it can be uploaded and viewed by members of the triad.

B. Module materials: In this section, you will choose one of three options (or create your own) for facilitating conversations with your members about sacramental preaching. The first option guides a post-sermon conversation with your members through a simple response form. The second exercise facilitates learning and discussion with your members before and after the sermon. The third exercise uses Bible class and two surveys, one before and one after the sermon.

2.2 UPLOADING THE SERMON:

A. General description: Before the next meeting of the triad, you may wish to upload a digital video of your sermon to the internet so that it can be watched prior to the meeting by the other members of your triad. You may also choose to email them an electronic manuscript of the sermon.

B. Module materials: Before you preach the sermon, make a test video of yourself in the preaching space. This will enable you to make any adjustments lighting, sound, and visual representation so that the video recording of the sermon is of excellent quality.

After recording the sermon, upload a copy of the video for use by the members of your triad. If you do not have a church website to which you are uploading the video, you may use either YouTube or Vimeo.

If you want your video to remain private, you may use the privacy settings in YouTube or password protect the video in Vimeo. For more information about uploading videos for private viewing, see the video-based instructions readily available upon an internet search for “How do I upload a private video to YouTube?” or “How do I password protect a video on Vimeo?”

Sample response sheet

Please answer the following questions regarding the sermon:

- 1) By the time the sermon was over, was it clear to you that the sermon was directing you to a specific place for comfort? If so, where?
- 2) Did the sermon help you see a new facet of the Sacraments? Explain your response.
- 3) Did the sermon help you to see how the Bible talks about the Sacraments more than you thought or show you a place that teaches about the Sacraments that you didn't realize?
- 4) Did the sermon feel as if it was opening a particular passage or story in the Bible or did it feel more like a lecture from confirmation instruction? Does that matter to you? Did the sermon give you what you expect from a sermon? Why or why not?
- 5) What would you like me as a preacher to know as you consider how the Sacraments function in your life and in our church?

Exercise 2: Conversations before and after the sermon

Group selection: Identify five or six members of the congregation who will interact with you before and after the sermon to discuss the role of the Sacraments in their lives and in your congregation. You may choose to offer an open invitation for members to participate in this exercise or you may select the members by personally inviting them. When selecting members, you may think about working with particular groups of people in the congregation (e.g., the elders, the confirmands, the new member class, etc.).

Be aware: it is almost inevitable that the people you invite will have criticisms or concerns about the congregation's practice (individual cups, closed Communion, gluten-free and alcohol issues, wedding policies, confirmation age, etc.). Inviting them will give you the chance to converse and catechize them, but it could also open you and the congregation to criticism that is painful to hear and inaccurate or mis-informed. While that is not pleasant, that information is good fodder for preaching on the Sacraments. Be honest with your members about what you can and cannot tolerate and also what your goals are, if any, in moving your congregation's practice.

Pre-sermon conversation: Meet with the members at some point before you preach the sermon. Ask them questions to discern their level of understanding and also their piety. What do they think the ideal practices are and why? Take time also to catechize them about the Sacraments and the Means of Grace. Perhaps take them through a sacramental motif or share other information that you have learned or been reminded of in this module. This will not only be good for them but will also help prepare them to hear the sermon.

Reflecting on their experience of the topic: For processing reflections about the Sacraments, you might ask group members to reflect on the liturgy itself or think back about how God works through means in their lives.

Listener reflection: Ask the members participating in the exercise to listen to the sermon and then, after reflecting on it and comparing it to their reflections on the liturgy or your earlier meeting and their own expectations and desires for congregation practices, to meet with you for more discussion. You may draw up a list of questions for them to consider or use the questions above.

Post-sermon conversation: Meet with the members and discuss their response to your sermon that emphasized the Sacraments. Open the meeting by reflecting on what you learned and discussed in your pre-sermon conversation. This calls to mind the doctrinal definitions of the Sacraments and also how your congregation expresses these realities through its practice.

After this review, invite open discussion of their experience of the sermon. If needed, you may begin the conversation by explaining what you tried to do in the sermon with regard to the Sacraments. It would be ideal if they were able to come up with this on their own, but they may need a little help. Or, if you have drawn up a list of questions for them to answer, proceed through the questions as you guide group discussion.

Remember that demonstrating a spirit of openness to feedback and gratitude for your members who are participating in this exercise will encourage honest and helpful feedback. Be honest about your goals in moving the congregation. Recognize that while your goal is to improve your ability to preach about these things, these are things that matter deeply to the members, and this could create some conflict.

Exercise 3: The whole Bible class and surveys

Group selection and pre-sermon activity: This exercise will use the entire Sunday morning Bible class. Before the sermon is preached, have your Bible class fill out a short survey designed to ascertain their level of understanding of what a Sacrament is and what Sacraments give and also what the Means of Grace are. Inspiration for these questions can be found in the Explanation to the Small Catechism.

What do you want them to know? Keep the survey short — no more than fifteen questions. Questions can be either true/false or multiple choice, but should not be essay questions. They should be anonymous. Do not discuss the surveys.

Collect the surveys and collate the data. This information can help you prepare a sermon that addresses specific weaknesses. The survey also will plant some ideas in your Bible class members and begin them thinking about the topic.

Post-sermon activity: Give your Bible class the same survey at the first meeting after you preach the sermon. Collect the surveys.

Option 1. Engage immediately in a discussion of what the first surveys revealed and how your sermon attempted to answer and respond to them. Make up your own questions or use the questions above to guide the discussion and ascertain if the sermon was effective or not.

Remember that demonstrating a spirit of openness to feedback and gratitude for your members who are participating in this exercise will encourage honest and helpful feedback. Be honest about your goals in moving the congregation. Recognize that while your goal is to improve your ability to preach about these things, these are things that matter deeply to the members, and this could create some conflict.

If time permits, conduct a brief Bible study on the Sacraments, perhaps taking the class through a sacramental motif that crosses several familiar Bible stories.

Option 2. Conduct Bible class as normal on the day of the second survey. Collate the data during the week and then bring all the survey results to the next Bible class. Then proceed as in option 1.

2.2 UPLOADING THE SERMON:

A. General description: Before the next meeting of the triad, you may wish to upload a video of your sermon to the internet so that it can be watched prior to the meeting by the other members of your group. You may also choose to email them the manuscript of the sermon.

B. Module materials: Before you preach the sermon, make a test video recording of yourself in the preaching space. This will enable you to make any adjustments to lighting, sound and visual representation so that the video recording of the sermon is of excellent quality.

After recording the sermon, upload the video for use by the members of your group. If you do not have a church website to which you are uploading the video, you may use either YouTube or Vimeo. If you want your video to remain private, you may use the privacy settings in YouTube or password protect the video in Vimeo. For more information about uploading videos for private viewing, see the video-based instructions readily available upon an internet search for “how do I upload a private video to YouTube?” or “How do I password protect a video on Vimeo?”

Phase 3:

TRIAD MEETING - CLOSING REFLECTIONS ON PASTORAL PRACTICE

The second meeting of the triad completes the practice-reflection model of learning.

You will watch one another's sermons, reflect with one another on your practice of preaching the baptized life and consider how to continue to grow in this area.

3.1 WATCHING THE SERMONS:

A. General description: Depending upon the preference of the group, the videos may be watched before the triad meets, or one or more of the sermons may be watched as part of the triad meeting. Pastors will view the sermons and converse about how they preach the baptized life and how each preacher may continue to grow in this area.

If the videos are to be viewed prior to the meeting, each pastor will upload a video of his sermon so that it may be viewed in advance by the other pastors in the triad.

B. Module materials: In this section, you will find three exercises that prepare you for reflecting with the members of your triad about their preaching the baptized life in the sermons you have viewed. You may use one of these exercises or create your own form of response.

Exercise 1: Assessment through discussion and checklist

- 1) Watch the video of the sermon.
- 2) Identify where the sermon exhibits textual and confessional baptismal theology.
- 3) Discuss where the sermon makes use of the homiletical suggestions of Caemmerer, Long and/or Chapell.

Exercise 2: Assessment through guided reflection

View the video of the sermon.

- 1) Make a list of what the preacher did well in preaching the baptized life. Offer a concrete example for each item on the list.
- 2) Make a list of what changes, if any, you would suggest to improve the preaching the baptized life in the sermon. For each change, offer a concrete example of what that change would look like in the sermon and why you think it would be an improvement.

Exercise 3: Assessment through solicited feedback

- 1) Before watching the sermon, contact the preacher and ask if there are any specific questions he would like you to consider when reflecting on his preaching.
- 2) View the video of the sermon.
- 3) Answer the questions provided by the preacher. Be sure to use concrete examples from specific moments in the sermon to support your response.

3.2 PASTORAL CONVERSATION:

A. General description: After viewing the sermons, you will engage in pastoral conversation with members of the triad. Each member of the triad should have the opportunity to have his sermon processed by the group.

There are three purposes to this conversation: to assess how effectively pastors preached the baptized life, to process the congregational response to the sermon, and to consider how to improve this aspect of preaching in the future.

B. Module materials: After viewing the sermon, the members of the triad will reflect with the preacher on preaching the baptized life.

For each preacher, the following process might be used to guide the conversation:

1) Preacher’s reflections: The preacher whose sermon is being discussed begins the conversation. He will introduce the sermon and identify what he felt were his strengths and weaknesses in this aspect of preaching. If he wants, he might show clips from the sermon for discussion.

2) Triad’s response: The other members of the triad will enter into the conversation when appropriate to affirm or reconsider the self-evaluation of the preacher and to share their observations and insights about the sermon and the preacher’s ability to preach the baptized life.

3) Preacher’s summary of congregational reflection: The preacher will then process the experience of conversing with the congregation, identifying (1) what he learned about his preaching context and (2) how the congregation responded to his preaching the baptized life.

4) Preacher’s plan for future growth: The conversation will close with the preacher and the members of the triad identifying strengths that the preacher and concrete actions the preacher might take to improve his preaching the baptized life in the future.

The preachers in the group conclude by praying for one another’s preaching and sacramental practices that they would be faithful and that the Lord would grant them patience and wisdom. Prayers may focus on the needs and commitments expressed in their conversation.

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