

# Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Des Moines, WA January 13, 2013

Titus 3:3-8

## Saved!

1. Assured by Christ's epiphany
2. Secured by Holy Baptism

Hymns: 89 – 709 – 294 – Closing: 79 (v. 2)

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

Titus 3:3-7 -

*At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.*

*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying.*

Are you a “saver” or a “thrower?” Usually people can be characterized as one or the other. How would your spouse or family members characterize you? Perhaps you're the type who is ready and willing to throw out anything that is not currently needed or being used. You might even have other family members come home and say, “Where's the \_\_\_ that I left on the table?” But it's too late, because you threw it out already!

Or, maybe you're quite familiar with the phrases, “Oh, that can be fixed... I might need that someday... No, don't throw that out; it's mine.” You see a use in any and everything, even if you don't currently use it.

In our Scripture reading today, we might ask the question, “Is God a Saver or a Thrower?”

Titus 3 is a short reading that is power-packed with thoughts on this. If you've already looked at the title of the sermon in the Sermon Notes today, you'll see a hint of what we're going to learn! **Let's consider the theme: “Saved!”** What does Titus teach us about the God who has saved? Salvation has been:

1. Assured by Christ's epiphany
2. Secured by Holy Baptism

## 1. Secured by Christ's epiphany

Our text began by saying, “*At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.*” Many years ago, a show ran on TV called “This Is Your Life!” The concept of the show was that a famous person in the audience would be called up on stage – supposedly by surprise – and the host would bring out old friends and talk about old memories of their life that would recount with pleasure the event of their early life.

Titus gives us an account at the beginning of our reading that we could call “This Is Your Life!” He describes how you have thought and behaved. But this is no pleasant walk down memory lane. What do we hear about our life?

- **Foolish** – The Greek word used here is actually a combination of two words: “without” and “mind.” Paul tells us here that at one time we were brainless! Perhaps your dad once asked you, “What were you thinking?!” and you answered, “I don't know.” You acted without using your brain. By nature we act senselessly and sinfully, without the mind of Christ.
- **Disobedient** – Literally, the root word here means “not convinced” or “not persuaded.” The stress is on the actions of a person because they aren't convinced of the truth. They don't have a heart of faith and their actions show it.
- **Deceived** – This is another interesting word. The sense behind it is that a

person has a bad guide. They've been misled, led astray. Before an individual meets God and submits to his wisdom, what kinds of things guide him?

- His own instincts and logic?
- Worldly friends?
- Philosophy?
- Manmade religion?
- The media?
- Advice from the rich and famous?

If the wisdom hasn't come from God, it's misleading.

- **Slave** – Would anyone choose to live with the status of a slave? By definition, it means someone else's will is over your life. You do not have freedom. You do not make choices. It's the nature of being a slave! The text says that we're slaves of the next two words...
- **Passions** – Again, a very unique word. Two words make up this one word in Greek: "Boil" and "up." The way this word developed was that things were recognized to "boil" inside a person, namely, their desires and impulses. When they boil up and are hard to control, this was considered a bad thing! The two impulses this word referred to came to be food and immorality, mostly the latter.  
By nature people are slaves to their lusts and passions. They are driven by them and consumed by them. Some even live simply to try to fulfill them.
- **Pleasures** – You would probably recognize the Greek word if you saw it transliterated into English: HEDONAI. We get the word "hedonism" from it. The word comes from a root that means "sweet" or "pleasant." So hedonism is pursuing what's pleasant to you. Therefore, when led by the sinful nature, this word has the evil connotation of living only to fulfill your own pleasures, even to the point of

fighting against God's will and his Word. Living selfishly for yourself!

- **Malice** – This is an especially bad word. It's a general word (and a strong one) that says that a person is a "bad person." They can be easily categorized as a wicked person who does bad things. This is the type of person your mother may have been mentioning when she said, "I don't like that person. I don't want you to hang around them." This is the type of person who would do evil things for fun that shock others.
- **Envy** – Our natural tendency is to have jealousy toward others because of what they have
- **Hated and hating**

"This Is Your Life!" You have been possessed by evil. You didn't have a truly sanctified thought in you. How true it is when Titus says we were saved "not by righteous things we had done."

Perhaps you use the term "elbow grease" once in a while. When I was young, I used to think that was actual grease! Most of you know that it simply means to put some more effort into the task. If you're scrubbing a stain out of the carpet and it's not coming out well, you might put some elbow grease into it, and scrub harder. Titus makes it clear that when it comes to our salvation, elbow grease does not work in any way. We have not been saved by our righteous acts, and no amount of pious effort on our part will help us in earning our salvation and standing before God in the Judgment.

Then we read, "*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy... having been justified by his grace, we (became) heirs having the hope of eternal life.*" We have been saved! How? How could we be saved after looking at our wretched condition earlier? **Our salvation has been secured by Christ's epiphany.**

We have an action-packed group of words here that section here that tell us why. Why would God save us?

- *Kindness* – This is an interesting word. It's a fruit of the Spirit for believers also. The original word for "kindness" describes the deeds that a morally upright person does, because they are the proper, good, kind things to do. They are the deeds that meet real needs of others. Helpful, useful, beneficial, kind, and good!
- *Love* – Some of you might know this Greek word also. It's PHILANTHROPIA. In describing a person, it's a PHILANTHROPIST. PHILEO is "love" and ANTHROPOS is "man." Today we use the term "philanthropist" for a person who loves mankind and does loving things for them. In this verse, we see God saved mankind in the epiphany of Christ simply because he loves mankind. He's a philanthropist!
- *Mercy* – This was God's motive for saving us. The sense of this word is that an individual looks at another person who needs help and is moved to aid them. One of the men here might be driving on I-5 in the rain at night and see an older woman on the side of the road with a flat tire. Even though he may be late, he thinks to himself, "She really needs help," and is moved to stop to lend her aid. God, out of his pity, helped us sinners in our lost condition!
- *Grace* – A familiar term to many of you: God's undeserved love.

God is not a "thrower," but a "Saver." He would not dispose of his fallen world after Adam and Eve's sin, but would fix and save it!

**Therefore, God the Father caused an "epiphany," a revealing or manifesting.** Because of these high motives of his, he sent his Son into the world as his Christmas gift. If you're not sure if God feels kindly or loving toward you, look at your Christmas gift from him. In this season of Epiphany as we commemorate the Baptism of our Lord, we see him officially beginning his earthly ministry. He is beginning to complete "the rest of the story" of our salvation that he has

come to do. Another verse in Scripture that says this so well is in 1 John 4: *"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."*

Jesus' epiphany will include not only his baptism, at which he was pointed out publicly by his Father in heaven. Not only will it include his preaching and healing in his ministry. It also includes his last trip to Jerusalem when he would allow himself to be arrested by his enemies, put on trial, and put to death on the cross. It would include his payment for your sin there. It includes the suffering and death that you deserved, which you will never have to face eternally in hell because of how he has paid your price and... SAVED you! **God is a Saver, and showed it in Christ's epiphany.**

## 2. Assured through Holy Baptism

Yet there can always be that sliver of doubt, can't there be? Perhaps it's because of all the deals that we hear about that are "too good to be true." After all, you know how the saying goes: "If it seems to be too good to be true, \_\_\_\_\_." When you get mail that says you're a winner, when a popup appears on your computer screen that says, "Click here, you're the big winner today," you know what you think.

For the penitent sinner who is truly crushed and broken over their sin, can doubt remain over whether what God has done and said in the past is true? And if it truly is for them?

If so, be comforted by the second part of our reading today! Titus – through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – has some clear things to say to you! *"He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying."*

Titus clearly draws a connection between the salvation that has been assured in Christ and how it has been secured through Holy Baptism. God works faith and spiritual growth through his Word and through his sacraments, and we see here just how important and comforting Holy Baptism is! What blessings does Titus tell us we receive in baptism?

- *Saved* – We’re pretty used to the words “save” and “Savior” in the church. It’s a pretty dramatic word in Greek. Literally, it refers to a rescue. The feeling is that someone was on the precipice of danger and was snatched away by a rescuer! This is what God has done for us.
- *Rebirth* – Again, two simple Greek words put together: “Born” and “again.” How reminiscent of Jesus words to Nicodemus: *“No one can enter the kingdom of heaven unless he is born of water and of the Spirit.”*(John 3:5) We have new life as we are born again in baptism!
- *Renewal* – Again, two Greek words put together: “Up” and “new.” Through baptism we have risen up, new and renewed.
- *Justified* – Many of you have probably learned about this word already. It’s a courtroom term. “Not guilty!” is the verdict that is pronounced. In God’s court we stand innocent only because our Savior has taken our sin and guilt on himself.
- *Heirs* – Now we come to the result for our lives. We are now called “heirs.” We’re recipients of something we did not earn ourselves, and something that it took a death to give. We haven’t experienced it in its complete fulfillment yet, but one day we will have it all in heaven!
- *Hope* – This refers to Christian hope, not the unsure hope of this world. The feeling behind this word is that it creates expectation and patient

waiting. It has a calm inner trust that what has been promised will come about.

- *Eternal life* – Finally, this is the goal of our faith. It is what we patiently wait for. It is where we are headed forever.

Other Scriptures teach us this same truth:

- *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children.”* (Acts 2:38)
- *“All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”* (Gal. 3:27)

All in all, the Bible tells us we have six blessings in Holy Baptism:

1. Forgiveness of sins
2. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit
3. The indwelling of Christ
4. Salvation
5. Born again
6. Heirs of heaven

### **Your salvation has been secured through Holy Baptism!**

This Scriptural view is so different than other opinions and false teachings about baptism in our world today. There’s a popular book today called “The Purpose Driven Life,” which has much to say about the Christian life – and some of it pretty good material. However, the author, Pastor Rick Warren, says this about what baptism is: ***“Like a wedding ring, (baptism) is a visible reminder of an inward commitment made in the heart.”*** Baptism is pointed to primarily as my commitment to the Lord, my vow that I have taken, my reminder of my faithfulness to God. This is the view of many reformed churches today. A non-denominational church website here in the Pacific Northwest says this about their teaching on baptism: ***“When we make the decision to accept Christ, the Bible says we should be baptized as a symbol of that commitment. There is no magic in the water. It doesn’t save you. Much like the wearing of a wedding ring***

*is a symbol of an inward commitment to your spouse, being baptized symbolizes publicly the inward commitment you've made to follow Christ."*

How different this notion is from what Scripture tells us in Titus 3 today! Rather than looking at baptism primarily as your vow you have made, view it as an heirloom that has been placed into your hands that is invaluable!

**Your salvation has been secured in it!**

Great comfort is ours through baptism. Martin Luther said this about the comfort that is ours: **"Baptism contains so much comfort that heaven and earth cannot comprehend it."**

Think about when the things we've seen in Titus will comfort you. Not only in your daily life of confession, but what about in your day of trial?

- In your moments of loneliness, you can say, "Surely I am baptized."
- In your moments of doubt, you can say, "Surely I am baptized."
- When you are lying on your bed of suffering and pain, you can say to yourself, "Surely I am baptized."
- When you are near death, you can say, "Surely I am baptized."

What a fitting day to remember the importance and comfort of the baptism of infants and children today as well. In Jesus Great Commission he told us to "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... and teaching them." The blessings of faith and salvation are for infants and little children, who are under the wrath of God by nature also. In fact, the New Testament connects baptism to circumcision in the Old Testament, which was performed on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. What comfort can be derived from the baptism of infants and little children? When tragedy strikes and when death even takes a child, for those who have been baptized special and great comfort can be possessed by the parents and loved ones: "Surely they were baptized." Titus tells us that tremendous blessings were conferred to that child through their baptism! God can save little children through the Word and through their spiritual parents' influence, yet the spiritual

blessings here laid out in Titus can't be underestimated!

In the end, all we can say is "Praise God!" Praise God that he is not a "thrower," but a "Saver!" When he could have trashed this sinful world and started over, in his grace he planned our salvation and assured it in Christ's epiphany. And he has given us tangible blessings and comfort in Holy Baptism, which secures our salvation.

On this day, let us praise God for this, and may we live in this baptismal grace all our lives! Amen.