

March 25

It's Hard Not to Use Noah As a Picture of Baptism

(But which Noah, and which picture?)

"... who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

²¹ Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..." (1 Pt. 3:20,21)

We have a new grandchild in the family whose name is "Noah," so now you know which "Noah" I'm going to be talking about.

Noah Halverson was baptized on Christmas Eve Day, which should make "*remembering your baptism*" a little easier. And, of course, it's a wonderful day to have a baptism since it is a day dedicated to a new birth - one which changed everything!

Certainly, when Jesus was speaking with the old Pharisee Nicodemus, He was talking about baptism when He said, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*" (John 3:5)

All three regular baptismal liturgies in the Lutheran Service Book Agenda include the following line about the Noah who is more famous than my grandson: "*Almighty and eternal God, according to Your strict judgment, You condemned the unbelieving world through the flood, yet according to Your great mercy, You preserved believing Noah and his family, eight souls and all....*" So now it seems as though baptism is not only a picture of new birth, but also a picture of preservation. We think of the ark of Noah as being like the continuing church. (Interestingly, the main part of the church, the "nave," is related to the similar word "navy" since the Church has historically reflected a vessel of protection, and sometimes conflict. Hence, "the Church militant!")

"New birth, the safety and nurturing of the church, an ark, a navy, conflict...." This is getting complicated. How many pictures of baptism are there? One slide in my adult catechesis class is entitled: **16 helpful New Testament Pictures of Baptism which affirm it as a "mystery" {i.e. a "sacrament"}** I have actually been planning on adding one more, "anointing," to make 17!

Baptism has so many pictures of "newness" which is another word used in Romans 6, describing how we walk after we are baptized, "*Therefore, we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father, we too might walk in newness of life.*" (Romans 6:4)

Of course, being a grandparent is a wonderful thing; one of the most wonderful things is the newness. If you asked me to describe our grandson, Noah, the first six weeks after he was born, I would say, "He eats and sleeps." But as he grows, every day is a new day, and he does new things. Certainly, part of our baptismal identity is growth - after birth! It makes you wonder how much the animals grew in that one year that they were floating on that ark!

The beauty of being baptized into Christ is that we are *washed, reborn, regenerated, renewed, forgiven, secure, anointed, sealed....* And the list just keeps going! We discover all of that in the ark of the church, feeding on the food of God's Word, growing in Christ and in faith, living communally as different as we are, and yet all baptized into Christ – His adopted children! I'm talking about Noah, and Noah, and you.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You for our new life, baptized into You! Help us grow in You. Amen.*