

“Baptism: Resting in the Waters”

Baptism

Acts 2:37-41

Isle Royal National Park is an island located thirty miles off the coast of the very tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The entire island is a national park. Visitors can take a ferry to the island from the town of Copper Harbor, Michigan, located on the northern most point of the Keweenaw Peninsula. Once on the island a visitor can explore the terrain in many different ways. One can travel one of its many hiking trails, camp in the backcountry, take a kayak around the perimeter of the island, or take a canoe to one of its many inland lakes. The island offers a great deal for the outdoor enthusiast.

In the summer of 2003 I was invited by one of my good friends to accompany him, his father, and his two brothers on a hiking trip to Isle Royale. The plan was to hike the entire length of the island, a fifty to sixty mile hike depending on which trails are taken. The plan was to set up camp near rivers, streams, and lakes along the way.

The first day was our longest day of hiking, traveling seventeen miles of rugged terrain in somewhat wet, rainy conditions. Once we arrived at our campsite that evening and set up camp the five of us went for a much needed dip in the lake. After a long day of hiking our feet were sore, our muscles were tired, and we were dirty. The waters of this particular lake offered much needed rest, refreshment, relaxation, and cleansing. At one time I recall kicking back in the water, looking straight up into the sky and resting in the water. Resting in and enjoying the many benefits that the water had to offer.

St. Peter offers to us a picture of rest and enjoyment in the waters at the very end of his sermon to the crowds in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. He says, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:38-39). Peter gives us a picture of rest and enjoyment in the waters by pointing us to Baptism.

According to Peter, in Baptism we receive primarily three things: *Christ, the Spirit of Christ, and the cross of Christ*. We meet Jesus and receive him as Christ when we are baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We receive the gift of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, who points us to Jesus and creates and sustains saving faith within us. We also are marked with the cross of Christ when we receive the benefit of the forgiveness of sins that Jesus purchased for us on the cross. Yes, according to Peter, in Baptism we receive *the Christ, the Spirit of Christ, and the cross of Christ*. A picture of rest and enjoyment in God and his salvation in through the waters of Baptism.

Luther also shows us a picture of rest and enjoyment in God and his salvation through the waters of Baptism. This evening we considered the second section of the fourth chief part of the *Small Catechism* on Holy Baptism. In that second section we reflected on the following question: What benefits does Baptism give? Luther answers that question by saying that “it 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.” With different words Luther paints the same picture as Peter. He points to the reality that Baptism brings *Christ, the Spirit of Christ, and the cross of Christ*. Resting in the enjoyment of God and his salvation through the waters of Baptism.

We need the rest that God gives us through these waters. Daily living is tiresome. Struggles of sin and temptation weary us and make our lives and the lives of others dirty and messy. In these Baptismal waters God offers his Spirit who brings spiritual, eternal, cleansing waters. Waters that are restful and relaxing. In these waters God brings his eternal forgiveness for tiresome, weary, struggling sinners like me and you.

Baptism is a gift and opportunity that God gives. It is the gift of rest and enjoyment of God and his salvation in Christ. It is an opportunity then to daily and continually live in his rest by returning to the promise and gifts God has given to us in our Baptisms.

Luther suggests that we daily return to our Baptisms and the eternal rest, promises, and enjoyment of God that he offers in those waters by practicing daily repentance. Daily we lay our burdens and our sins and our struggles before God. Daily we drown them in the bottom of the baptismal font through confession and repentance. Daily we emerge as God’s forgiven, renewed, and holy children. In this one way we kick back and rest in the enjoyment of God and his salvation as his baptized children. We rest in God and his work. The work that he once performed *in Christ, through the Spirit of Christ, on the cross of Christ*. Now in the event of your baptism he delivered *Christ, the Spirit of Christ, and the cross of Christ personally to you*. It is God’s Christ, Spirit, and cross. It is his grace, not your work. And it is for you to rest in and enjoy. Amen.