

Nto the Water

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers and the necessity of dying to oneself through baptism to experience this change.

Scripture: Matthew 3:11, Matthew 3:16, John 3:5, Romans 6:3

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the two kinds of churches in the world today, emphasizing the vital difference being the evident presence of the Spirit of God transforming lives, imparting forgiveness, and setting people free. He contrasts churches where the Spirit is at work, creating an atmosphere of joy and love, with those where the Spirit is not evident, leading to a lack of life-changing experiences. Using Jesus' baptism as an example, he highlights the importance of dying to self and allowing the Holy Spirit to empower and guide our lives, just as Jesus did throughout His ministry.

Transcript

There are really two kinds of churches in the world today.

The distinction between these two kinds of churches

has nothing to do with size or denomination.

They can be small or large,

liturgical or non-liturgical,

urban,

suburban.

The only significant difference between churches of whatever

shape or size is this:

On the one hand, there are churches where the Spirit of God

is clearly at work.

Transforming lives.

Convicting people of sin.

Imparting forgiveness.

Setting people free from the chains

that Satan has wrapped around their lives.

And of course,

in such places you always find an atmosphere of joy,

welcome,

love,

kindness,

generosity.

On the other hand, there are churches

where they use the same Bible as the others,

sing the same hymns and choruses,

even pray the same prayers.

But the Spirit of God is just not evident.

It's "church" all right.

It may even be a big, successful church with lots of programs and activities,

but the Spirit of God is having a hard time making his presence known.

So nothing life changing is happening to these people.

They're participating,

maybe they're being entertained,

maybe their social needs are being met -- but that's about it.

And this can happen even in churches

where they talk about the Holy Spirit all the time.

Where everybody knows about the Holy Spirit,

but nobody knows him.

God's desire, of course, is that every church on earth should be alive with the presence of his Spirit, so that the people who are searching for God, for freedom from their chains, experience God's unspeakable love flowing into them from above and transforming them.

That's God's desire.

But this can only happen in a church or in a person where we allow it to happen, where we want it to happen.

As an example of what I mean, consider the change that took place in Jesus at his baptism.

For the first 30 years of his life, Jesus lived in such an ordinary way that nobody noticed him.

He worked as a carpenter-cabinetmaker.

He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath.

You couldn't tell him apart from any other young Jewish man.

Then, one day he went down to the Jordan and got baptized by John.

As he came up out of the water, the heavens opened and the Spirit of God came upon him.

Now he begins to live a life so different from his former life, it's almost as if he's a different man.

After a time of trial in the wilderness,

Jesus starts to preach, teach, and heal.

What's got into him?

His family is upset.

They think he's beside himself!

But there's one thing they can't deny --

there's power in his words.

Power in those hands that heal.

Where did it come from? It wasn't there before.

"Well", you say, "Wasn't he the Son of God?"

"Why shouldn't he have power?"

We must understand that the Eternal Word left all that behind
when he came into this world.

His mantle of power as the Son of God
was left back at the headquarters of the universe.

The power that comes to him now, at his baptism,
is the Power of the Holy Spirit.

He gets baptized, heaven opens, and the Spirit comes on him.

But why does he need to be baptized? He is without sin.

Yet, Jesus insists, "Baptize me!"

Because when Jesus goes down into that water,
he's joining himself to our sin.

It's a death.

He's giving up all rights to himself.

And when he dies to himself in that water, the Holy Spirit comes
and raises him from the dead and becomes his life.

So,

you have a death and a resurrection at the beginning of Jesus' ministry
and a death and resurrection at the end of his ministry.

And in between, you have a life totally directed by the Holy Spirit.

That's why his words had such power,
he could cast out demons,
lay his hands on the sick and heal them.

"I can do nothing out of myself," he says,
"It's the Father who dwells in me by the Spirit doing all this."

Now here's the part so many are missing.

After Jesus' death and resurrection,
when he had washed away our sins with his blood,
he promised that he would pour out on his followers
the same Holy Spirit who had empowered him
and that they would do what he did.

That was the whole point of his coming,
purpose of his atoning death.

Listen to John the Baptist:

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is
coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am
not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy
Spirit and with fire." (Matthew 3:11)

So what kind of Christian do we have where this never happens?

Where to be baptized with the Holy Spirit,
quicken, empowered, and guided by the Spirit of God, is all theory?

Coming under the power of the Holy Spirit is what it's all about.

If you don't have this, what do you have?

And what kind of church is it
where the Holy Spirit is known only as a doctrine?

If Jesus died and rose again to give us the Holy Spirit,
who bears witness to him,
empowers us to walk in his steps,
anoints us to speak his word,
how come in so many places, the Spirit can't even get in the door?

"And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'"

(Matthew 3: 16)

He went down into the water and died to himself.

He came up out of the water, heaven opened, and the Spirit came upon him.

This same miracle is meant to happen in the life of every follower of Christ.

You die to yourself in those waters.

Heaven opens, the Spirit comes, and a new life begins.

It's as simple as that.

In our mainline churches these days, you hear the word "baptism" more often than you hear the word Jesus.

"...all the baptized people of God."

"Your baptism," they say, "is your assurance that you belong to God."

"Your baptism is the sign of God's prevenient grace."

But baptism is not magic.

As if, "Now you're baptized, you're plugged in.

You're one of the elect."

No, baptism involves a death.

Baptism involves yielding your life to God.

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the

Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

(Romans 6:3-4)

In other words,

you can't be raised by the Spirit into a new life

until you die to the old one down in that water.

In Jesus' case,

he identified with our sin when he went down into the water.

In our case, we die to our sin when we go down into the water.

Even if you didn't even know what was going on when you got baptized,

you were a baby,

there has to be a point at which you make it real

by offering yourself up to God like Jesus did at his baptism.

So, we turn ourselves over.

We present ourselves as a living sacrifice.

"Here I am, Lord. My life is at your disposal."

The minute we say that, and mean it,

heaven opens,

and the Spirit of God comes upon us.

Life in the Spirit begins

as the Spirit bears witness to Christ in our hearts,

reminds us of the things Jesus said,

empowers us to walk in his will.

We find ourselves able to do things we could not before.

We pray with power

and we speak with boldness.

The love of God starts flowing through us to others.

Of course, once this begins, it happens over and over again.

Every day you go down into the water,
and when you come up, heaven opens, the Spirit comes.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water
and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

(John 3:5)

The Spirit is God's part. The water is our part.

The water means I put my agenda aside -- die to myself.

"Okay Lord, Here I am, at your disposal. You call the shots."

Heaven opens -- the Spirit comes.

What holds for us as individuals, holds for us as a church.

If we really want the Spirit of God to take charge of this church,
and fill it with life,

all we have to do is get serious and follow Jesus together,
down into the water.

God help us to die with him in that water

and we will see the heavens open,

and the Spirit of God descending on this place.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/nto-the-water/>

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