

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth

Sunday, August 23rd, 2026

Rev. Gerry Gallant

Come and Be Changed: The Gospel of Baptism

Proper 16

Romans 6:1-11

Welcome

Good morning, everyone, and welcome.

It is a special privilege to gather here today as we worship God together—not inside a church building, but here in the community, just as the earliest Christians in Perth gathered before they had a church of their own.

The story of our congregation reaches back to 1817, when the Rev. William Bell arrived in Perth as the first resident Presbyterian minister.

His ministry began before there was a church building. The earliest services were held in the upstairs room of Adamson's Red Inn where the congregation gathered, prayed, heard the Word, celebrated the Lord's Supper, and began building the church long before they had a building to call their own.

And that reminds us of something important.

The church has never been about a building. The church is God's people gathered around Jesus Christ and His Gospel.

Buildings change.

Generations change.

Locations change.

But Jesus Christ remains the head of His Church.

So we gather here in this park with the same basic calling Christians have always had: to worship Christ, proclaim His Gospel, make disciples, and pass the faith to the next generation.

And today, as we witness baptisms, we are reminded that the Gospel is not something belonging only to the people who came before us.

The Gospel is the power of God to save sinners today.

So may God use our gathering today to glorify Christ, strengthen His people, and proclaim His salvation to our community.

Welcome, and may God bless our time of worship together.

Announcements

Call to Worship

Come, let us worship the Lord, our God, who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

We come to worship the God who gives life to the dead and calls sinners to Himself.

Hear the Word of the Lord: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

We are not our own. We belong to Jesus Christ.

Through Christ we have died to sin, and through Christ we have been raised to newness of life.

We will proclaim the goodness of our God and rejoice in the salvation He has given us.

So let us turn our hearts toward Christ. Let us leave behind every confidence in ourselves and come to the One who saves completely.

We come to worship Jesus Christ—crucified, risen, reigning, and worthy of all our praise.

Amen.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Almighty and gracious God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we come before You today with grateful hearts.

You are the God who gives life where there is death. You are the God who calls sinners out of darkness and brings them into the light. You are holy, righteous, merciful, and full of steadfast love.

Father, we praise You because You loved us when we were still far from You. You did not leave us in our sin or abandon us to the consequences of our rebellion. You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself the judgment we deserved.

Lord Jesus Christ, we worship You because You willingly died for sinners. You were buried, but death could not hold You. You rose again in victory, and because You live, all who belong to You have the hope of resurrection and eternal life.

Holy Spirit, we praise You because You give life to spiritually dead hearts. You convict us of sin, draw us to Christ, give us faith, and begin the work of transforming us into the likeness of Jesus.

Today we rejoice in the visible testimony of baptism. As we see people enter the water and rise again, remind us that our salvation is found in Christ alone. Baptism points us to His death, His burial, His resurrection, and the new life He gives to everyone who trusts in Him.

So, Lord, meet with us now.

Open our hearts to Your Word. Convict us where we need conviction. Encourage us where we are discouraged. Call those who are far from You to repentance and faith. Strengthen those who already belong to Christ to walk faithfully in newness of life.

May everything we say, sing, pray, and witness today point away from ourselves and toward Jesus.

For He alone is worthy.

We ask all this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Opening Hymns:

Glorify Thy Name

Father, we love you, we worship, we adore you,
glorify your name in all the earth,
glorify your name, glorify your name,
glorify your name in all the earth.

Jesus, we love you, we worship, we adore you,
glorify your name in all the earth,
glorify your name, glorify your name,
glorify your name in all the earth.

Spirit, we love you, we worship, we adore you,
glorify your name in all the earth,
glorify your name, glorify your name,
glorify your name in all the earth.

Sing Hallelujah to the Lord

Sing alleluia to the Lord,
Sing alleluia to the Lord,
Sing alleluia, sing alleluia,
Sing alleluia to the Lord!

Jesus is risen from the dead,
Jesus is risen from the dead,
Jesus is risen, Jesus is risen,
Jesus is risen from the dead!

Jesus is coming for his own,
 Jesus is coming for his own,
 Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming,
 Jesus is coming for his own.

Sing alleluia to the Lord,
 Sing alleluia to the Lord,
 Sing alleluia, sing alleluia,
 Sing alleluia to the Lord!

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

Romans 6:1-11

6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Sermon

We have gathered in this park to worship God and to witness something ancient, powerful, and joyful: brothers and sisters being baptized. Baptism gives us a visible picture of the Gospel—death with Christ, resurrection with Christ, and a life now marked by Him.

Before we come to the water, we need to understand what baptism means. Baptism is not a religious work that earns salvation. It is God's covenant sign and seal, pointing us to Christ's death and resurrection and publicly marking us as belonging to His people. Water does not save us; Christ saves us, and baptism directs our eyes to Him.

To understand baptism, we first need to understand the human heart. We all want to believe there is something we can do—the right ritual, work, sacrifice, or religious act—that will finally make God accept us.

So, if baptism is not a religious work that earns salvation, what is it? Baptism is God's covenant sign and seal, pointing us to Christ's death and resurrection and publicly marking us as belonging to His people. Water does not save us; Christ saves us, and baptism directs our eyes to Him.

Listen carefully to how Scripture leads us:

Romans 6:1-4

6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Paul then brings this truth home with a command:

Romans 6:11

¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This is the heart of what we need to hear today: baptism declares that we have died with Christ, been raised with Christ, and are now called to live for Christ.

But notice that Paul is saying something even deeper than that. He is not merely telling us to imitate Christ. He is telling us that believers are united to Christ.

Everything Paul says flows from those words: *with Christ*. The Christian life begins not with what we do for Jesus, but with what God has done by joining us to Him through faith. Our obedience comes afterward as the fruit of that grace.

Union with Christ is the foundation. New obedience does not create that union; it flows from it.

So before we look at the water, we must ask the deeper question: are you united to Christ by faith?

If union with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life, then we must not assume that being near the things of Christ is the same as being united to Christ by faith.

Jesus Himself warned about this.

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ 'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

That's one of the most sobering warnings in all of Scripture.

Ask yourself: Are you actually in Christ—or only near the things of Christ?

The question is not whether you are near Christianity, baptized, or in church. The question is: Has your heart bowed before Jesus? Have you repented? Are you trusting Christ, or still trying to earn your way to God?

False faith wants the benefits of Jesus without Jesus Himself.

But here is the thing about genuine faith: when it happens, something changes. Not perfectly. Not overnight. But genuinely.

So let me ask you plainly: If your Christian life were on trial, would there be evidence? Would there be fruit?

Because a real relationship with Christ is not invisible. It shows in the way you live.

Paul is not teaching sinless perfection. He is saying that something fundamental has changed: Christians have died to sin's dominion.

Christianity is not adding Jesus to an unchanged life or merely becoming more disciplined, respectable, religious, or informed. The Gospel is more radical: Christ changes people from the inside out.

Our deepest problem is not that we need improvement; we are spiritually dead, separated from God by sin. A dead person does not need advice. A dead person needs life.

So, if you have never fully trusted Christ, your greatest need is not to become better. Your greatest need is to become alive.

When we trust in Jesus, God accepts us not because we have become righteous, but because Christ is righteous. Our sins are counted to Christ, His righteousness is counted to us, and we are justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

We do not obey to earn God's acceptance. We obey because, in Christ, we have already been accepted.

Think of someone once ruled by a cruel king. The king has been defeated, but he still shouts orders. Out of old habit, his former subjects may still feel the pull to obey him, but he no longer has rightful authority over them.

That is what happens in Christ: sin has not disappeared, but it no longer has dominion over the person who belongs to Jesus.

That warning is serious, but it is not meant to drive weak believers away from Christ. It is meant to send us back to Him, where assurance rests not in the strength of our grip, but in the strength of His grace.

Christians still fight sin. Christians still stumble. Christians still have seasons of weakness. The question is not whether we struggle, but where we run when we struggle.

If you keep returning to Christ—confessing sin, clinging to His promises, longing to follow Him—that is evidence of His gracious work within you.

But baptism does not only picture death with Christ. It also points us to resurrection life, because the Savior who died for sinners has also risen in power.

Romans 6:4

'Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.'

When someone comes out of the water today, you are seeing a picture of resurrection: not only what Christ has done, but what He continues to do in His people.

Sin, failure, and death no longer have the final word because Jesus is the final word.

And because Jesus lives, those who belong to Christ are alive too. This is not merely a spiritual concept; it is a reality that changes how you live.

Christianity is resurrection life made visible: because Jesus lives, those who belong to Him are changed by His power.

And the risen Jesus gives spiritual life to all who trust Him.

When Christ saves you, you do not merely receive forgiveness. You receive a new heart, new desires, and new strength because you have a new Master—and He is infinitely better than the old one.

The Apostle Paul wrote something extraordinary:

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

This is what the Gospel offers: not self-help, moral improvement, or a better version of your old life, but genuine new life with Christ.

Paul describes that new life with a simple but searching word: walk.

That word “walk” is important. The Greek word is *peripateō*. It means to conduct one’s life. Paul is not describing a one-time experience, but a new pattern of living.

When Christ saves you, you begin walking differently. Not perfectly, but genuinely. You begin to hate the sins you once loved and love the holiness you once ignored. You begin to forgive those who hurt you, serve others, pray, hunger for God's Word, and care about the souls of others.

And when you fall—and you will—you don't simply shrug your shoulders and say, “That's just who I am.” You run back to Christ. You confess. You repent. You receive His forgiveness. And by His grace, you continue in Him.

It is not perfection or sinlessness, but a genuine change of direction. But here we must be clear, because Christians can easily become confused.

Our changed lives are not the reason God saves us. We are not justified because we have become good enough; we are justified because of the finished work of Jesus Christ, received through faith. Our obedience is the fruit of a salvation already given, not its foundation.

Justification is the root. Sanctification is the fruit. We are not saved because we are changing. We are changing because, by God's grace, we have been saved and united to Christ.

Here’s why this matters: our culture often assumes that someone can claim Christ and remain unchanged. But Scripture does not treat faith as a label we wear; true faith joins us to Christ and begins to bear visible fruit.

If you have only added Jesus to your old life without yielding to Him, ask whether you have truly trusted Christ, because genuine faith does not remain barren.

The point is not to make tender consciences despair, but to call every heart back to Christ. Where the Spirit gives true faith, He also begins to produce new life.

We do not unite ourselves to Christ by the strength of our decision. God graciously unites us to Christ through faith, and that union begins to change the way we live.

Maybe you grew up in church, had Christian parents, were baptized, attended Sunday school, quoted Scripture, or received communion for years. But none of those things can replace the deeper question: has Christ truly changed your heart?

Do you see your sin as something you need to be rescued from? Are you trusting in Christ alone for your salvation? Is your life beginning to bear the marks of resurrection grace?

Because you can do all the Christian things and still be spiritually dead.

Be honest with yourself. Are you pretending or hiding so you can live the way you want? Stop comparing yourself with people who appear worse than you.

Look at Jesus. Really look at Him. And ask yourself: Does my life show that I belong to Him? Or have I simply borrowed the language of Christianity without the reality?

As we stand at the water's edge, the Gospel now presses its claim on every heart.

If you have never trusted Christ, if you've never personally come to Him in repentance and faith, then the invitation of the Gospel is for you.

Right now, today, you do not have to clean yourself up first. You cannot make yourself good enough. That is exactly why the invitation is grace.

You don't have to get your life together. You don't have to fix your problems. You don't have to turn over a new leaf and hope it sticks.

Jesus said: 'Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

Not, 'Come to me and work harder.'

Not, 'Come to me and get baptized and then you'll be saved.' Just, 'Come to me. I'll give you rest.'

That rest is real. That rest is what happens when you stop trying to save yourself and trust the One who has already done all that is needed to save you.

Here is the Gospel invitation: repent and believe.

Confess that you are a sinner who cannot save yourself. Turn away from your sin and turn toward Jesus Christ. Believe that He died for sinners, that He was raised from the dead, and that He alone is able to save you.

You are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ—not by the strength of your promise, the firmness of your resolve, or the water of baptism.

So stop looking to yourself. Stop trying to earn what God freely gives. Look to Christ, who alone is able to save.

And because baptism is a public response to the grace of Christ, those who are trusting Him should not be ashamed to confess Him openly.

And if you are serious about following Christ, come to the water today. Be baptized. Declare before God and these witnesses that your hope rests in Jesus Christ and that, by His grace, you desire to live as one raised with Him.

And if you already belong to Christ, remember what Romans 6 calls you to: walk in newness of life. Turn from sin. Pursue holiness. Love the people God has placed in your path. Hunger for His Word. Pray. Serve.

Do not simply add Jesus to your old life and call it discipleship. Follow Him.

So here we are, at the water's edge.

In just a few moments, people will enter this water and come out again. When you see that happen, I want you to see two things at once.

First, see the Gospel.

See the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. See the Savior who died for sinners and rose again. See the grace of God that gives life to the dead.

Second, see the calling.

Those who belong to Christ are called to die to sin and walk in newness of life. Baptism keeps that calling before us because it points us back to Christ, who died and rose for us.

Grace comes first, and obedience follows because Christ has already made us His own.

And if you are not yet in Christ, hear the invitation of the crucified and risen Savior. He is able to save completely. He does not call you to pretend, perform, or make yourself worthy. He calls you to come honestly, turn freely, and trust Him.

And if you are already in Christ, remember: grace does not leave us where it found us. The grace that justifies us also begins to sanctify us, teaching us to live increasingly for the One who loved us and gave Himself for us.

So whether you are coming to Christ for the first time, returning with fresh repentance, or seeking to walk more faithfully in the grace you have received, hear His gracious call: look to Christ, trust Him, rest in Him, and follow Him.

For everyone who is in Christ, we can say: I was guilty, but Christ bore my guilt. I was dead, but Christ gave me life. I was enslaved, but Christ set me free. I was lost, but Christ found me. I belong to sin no longer. I belong to Jesus.

So let us come before the Lord who saves, changes, and keeps His people.

Let us pray

Grant, O merciful Lord, what You command, and command what You will.

Since You have united us to Christ in His death and resurrection, teach us to die daily to sin and to live unto righteousness.

Take from us every love that competes with Your love. Take from us every idol that seeks to rule our hearts. Take from us every confidence that rests in ourselves.

Give us hearts that delight in Your will, minds renewed by Your truth, and lives that bear witness to the grace we have received.

May those who have trusted in Christ walk in newness of life, and may those who do not yet know Him find in Him their only Savior and Lord.

Through Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Amen.

Adapted from Augustine of Hippo

Baptisms

Explanation

Before we begin, let us remember what baptism means. Baptism is God's covenant sign and seal, pointing us to His promise and grace in Jesus Christ. Those baptized today publicly profess faith in Christ and their desire to walk in obedience to Him, but our confidence rests not in the strength of their promise, but in the faithfulness of God and the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is God's covenant sign and seal, pointing us to His promise and grace in Jesus Christ.

Those baptized today publicly profess faith in Christ and their desire to walk in obedience to Him, but our confidence rests not in the strength of their promise, but in the faithfulness of God and the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Baptism points to what God has done for us in Christ and calls us to live faithfully as those who belong to Him.

These brothers and sisters come to the water publicly confessing faith in Jesus Christ. Their hope rests in Him alone, and by His grace they are called to live as those raised with Him.

These questions are public vows of faith before Christ and His Church, grounded in God's gracious promise and answered by trusting Him.

The covenant begins with God's gracious promise in Christ; we respond by trusting Him and, by His grace, walking faithfully with Him.

Presentation

If you have professed faith in Jesus Christ and wish to be baptized, please come forward.

Renunciation and Affirmation

People wanting to be baptized or rededicated

To those about to be baptized: you are publicly professing faith in Jesus Christ and committing to follow Him—not merely with your lips, but with your life.

Your hope rests in God's gracious promise in Christ. So answer sincerely before Him.

Do you acknowledge your sin and your need for mercy, new life, and rescue in Jesus Christ?

I do.

Do you turn from sin and trust Jesus Christ alone as your Savior and Lord, believing that He died for sinners and rose again?

I do.

Do you promise, by God's grace and the power of His Spirit, to follow Christ, pursue holiness, and walk in newness of life?

I do.

Gathered Witnesses

Now I'm going to turn to you—all of you watching. This isn't just about the person in the water. When someone publicly professes faith in Christ like this, the church has a responsibility.

So I'm asking you: Will you walk alongside these brothers and sisters? When they stumble—and they will stumble—will you be there to remind them who they belong to? When the world pressures them to return to their old ways, will you strengthen them? Will you pray for them? Will you model what it means to walk with Jesus?

Will you be the community that helps them walk faithfully with Christ?

We will.

Thanksgiving

Before we step into the water, let's remember what God has done.

We give you thanks, O God, for the gift of your Spirit.

In the beginning, You spoke, and order came from chaos. Life came from nothing. And You saw that it was good.

When sin flooded the world, You didn't abandon us. You saved a faithful family through the waters and started again.

When Your people were enslaved, You led them through the sea to freedom. You made a covenant with them and said, 'You are Mine.'

And in the fullness of time, You sent Jesus. He was born of a woman. He was baptized in the Jordan River and anointed by Your Spirit. And in His ministry, He offered living water—real water, spiritual water—to those who were thirsty.

He washed the feet of His disciples. He died and was buried. He rose from the dead.

And now He sends us out to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything He has commanded us.

We thank You that baptism is not magic, and the water itself does not save. Yet baptism is not empty either: You have given it to Your Church as a visible sign and seal of covenant grace, setting the Gospel before us in visible form.

God has given baptism to His Church as a visible sign and seal of His covenant grace. Through it, He sets before us the Gospel in visible form.

The water points us to Christ.

The washing points us to His cleansing.

The burial points us to His death.

The rising points us to His resurrection.

And the whole sacrament reminds us that those who belong to Christ are called to walk in newness of life.

The power is not in the water. The power is in God, whose grace the sacrament signifies and seals.

The Act of Baptism

As you come into these waters, you are publicly confessing that your hope is in Christ, that you belong to Him, and that by His Spirit you desire to live as one raised with Him.

I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Declaration and Welcome

To those of you who have been baptized today, hear this clearly. You have publicly professed your faith in Jesus Christ before God and before His people, testifying that your hope is in Christ alone.

The church receives you and welcomes you as brothers and sisters who have publicly confessed Christ.

And you are not walking this road alone.

We commit ourselves to pray for you, encourage you, correct you when necessary, and remind you of the Gospel when you stumble.

Remember that your salvation rests not upon the strength of your promise but upon the faithfulness of your Savior.

So live faithfully as those who have been raised with Christ: turn from sin, pursue holiness, love the people God places in your path, hunger for His Word, pray, and serve.

Turn from sin.

Pursue holiness.

Love the people God places in your path.

Hunger for His Word.

Pray.

Serve.

And when you stumble, confess your sin, turn again to Christ, receive His grace, and keep walking.

Your hope is not that you will never fall. Your hope is that Jesus Christ will never fail.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May He turn His face toward you and give you peace.

Amen.

Closing Hymn:

I'll Fly Away

Some glad morning when this life is o'er,
I'll fly away;
To a home on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away (I'll fly away).

Chorus

I'll fly away, Oh Glory
I'll fly away; (in the morning)
When I die, Hallelujah, by and by,
I'll fly away (I'll fly away).

When the shadows of this life have gone,
I'll fly away;
Like a bird from prison bars has flown,
I'll fly away (I'll fly away). (Chorus)

Just a few more weary days and then,
I'll fly away;
To a land where joys shall never end,
I'll fly away (I'll fly away). (Chorus)

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give You thanks for the brothers and sisters who stepped into the water today and publicly confessed that they belong to Jesus Christ. Uphold them by Your Spirit, strengthen their faith, and teach them to follow Christ with joy, courage, and perseverance.

We pray also for this congregation. Help us support these believers with patience, love, and faithfulness. Make us quick to encourage, ready to forgive, willing to correct in love, and eager to remind one another of the Gospel when we stumble.

As we move from worship into fellowship, bless our gathering. Let our conversations reflect the grace we have received. Nourish our bodies, strengthen our love for one another, and keep our hearts hungry for Your Word. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Benediction/Blessing

May the Father who chose you, the Son who died and rose for you, and the Spirit who dwells in you guard your hearts, strengthen your steps, and make you faithful until the day when faith is swallowed up in sight.

Go in the name of the Triune God— Father, Son, and Holy Spirit— knowing that you belong no longer to yourselves, but to the One who loved you and gave Himself for you.

Amen.