

Baptism

Scripture: Isaiah 1:10 -18

11/6/22

Let's review last two week's message concerning Walter Scott's Five Finger Exercise. Finger #1 – FAITH and Finger #2 – REPENTANCE.

What if our clothes were more functional? What if our cloths had an ability to clean themselves? What if after dropping ketchup or mustard or spilling drink on our cloths, they would clean themselves? Can I get a cheer for self-cleaning cloths? (Pause)

What a wonderful idea – self-cleaning cloths! All those shirts of mine that have stains on them would be miraculously clean! Do you know that on most of my shirts, the stains happen here (point at top of shirt), they do not happen down here (point at bottom of my shirt)! I wonder why?

Well an engineer in China has developed a special clothing coated with a chemical that causes cotton to clean itself of stains and odors when exposed to ultraviolet light! Can you imagine the implications of having self-cleaning clothes?

A self-cleaning coating might work for stained clothes, but only God can clean a stained soul!

In our scripture reading from Isaiah and in ancient Judah, God was angry with his people because they had turned their backs on him. They had given themselves to corruption and evil, and they were worshipping false gods. But to make matters worse, they tried to clean themselves by offering sacrifices, burning incense, saying many prayers, and gathering together in solemn assemblies. Yet their hypocritical and sinful hearts remained! The remedy was for them to come to their senses and with a repentant heart bring the stains on their souls to a holy and loving God. His grace would cleanse them and make them spiritually white as snow.

When we sin, there is no self-cleaning solution. It is only with a humble and repentant heart that our sins are forgiven. We must acknowledge our sins and place them under the cleaning light of God's holiness. We must turn from them and return to God. And God, the only one who can clean the stains of our soul, will offer us complete forgiveness and renewed fellowship.

This idea of cleaning the stains of our soul leads us to Walter Scott's 3rd finger of his Five Finger Exercise – BAPTISM.

(Put 'Baptism sign on picture of finger)

Over time baptism has taken many forms. Most of you either were baptized as an infant by sprinkling or were baptized by immersion. How many of you were baptized as an infant?

(Pause)

Some of the more unusual forms of baptism are: Baptism by Fire where an individual walks barefoot over hot coals or baptism by walking into a pit of vipers where an individual walks through a pit filled with poisonous snakes.

Here are the types of baptism: Baptism of Repentance which is what John the Baptist practiced, Baptism into the body of Christ which is what we practice, and baptism into the Holy Spirit.

Our history and its leaders – the Faithful Four – Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, and Walter Scott, all performed baptism by immersion. This practice of believer's baptism and the public utterance of a faith in Jesus Christ, became our first unifying doctrine of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The public utterance of faith in Jesus Christ is one of our most important positions of the CC (DOC). For the Campbells, baptism was done in Brush Creek WV near Bethany WV.

Walter Scott believed that baptism offered persons who believed in the good news of Jesus Christ and who repented of their sins, the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins and the beginning of a new relationship with God.

Walter Scott thought baptism was very important. He believed that once people had faith in Jesus and were truly sorry for the wrongs they did, they could be baptized and begin a new and special way of being God's friend.

With the practice of baptism by immersion, our denomination was in partnership with the Baptist Church but under the leadership of Walter Scott and his evangelism, we separated from the Baptist church and became a separate religious body.

During my trip to the Holy Land several years ago, I reaffirmed my faith in Jesus Christ by going into the Jordan River, supposedly near where Jesus entered the water to be baptized by John the Baptist. It was a very moving event, this is the certificate I received for doing this.

Let me set up for a five min video of this event. At the end of our service, the rest of the video will be played which is 12 min long.

The video clip comes from Yardenit Israel which is south of the Sea of Galilee on the Jordan River. Please notice that the Jordan River is like a stream, it is not very wide or deep. It was a beautiful site and we had a gorgeous day to be there. You can see fish swimming around your feet. This happened in March of 2018 so the water was very chilly. There is a concrete walkway and metal handrail to guild you into the water. And if you are wondering – the concrete walkway and metal handrail was NOT there in Jesus' day! The concrete walkway was very slippery with a moss going on it.

The night before our trip to the baptism site, we met as a group to discuss this event. The baptism Jesus did in the Jordan River was a baptism of repentance. It is believed that Jesus would not have been immersed under water by having John the Baptist lean him backwards unto the water because the concept of 'resurrection' was not known in Jewish culture. And it is believed that Jesus and John the Baptist probably never touched each other. If they did touch, it was only to hold Jesus' hand. All of the people with me on this trip we baptized believers in Jesus Christ, so I told them they had two choices to make when they came towards me in the Jordan River: #1 – I would reaffirm their faith in Jesus Christ by leaning them backwards into the river or #2 – They could reaffirm their faith in Jesus Christ by just ducking themselves under the water. Half my group reaffirmed their faith one way and the other half did it the other way.

I chose to reaffirm my faith in Jesus Christ by dipping myself under the water. Nothing unusual happened during this event but when I came out of the water I could not breathe at first. The coolness of the water took my breath away! I am so very happy that I reaffirmed my faith in Jesus Christ in the Jordan River.

Let us now watch a five min clip of this event in Yardenit Israel.
Marc

Thank you Marc. The rest of the video will be played at the end of our service. So as we complete our third week of this sermon series on Walter Scott's Five Finger Exercise, we now have the first three fingers are – FAITH, REPENTANCE, and BAPTISM.

Let us pray:

Father, forgive us for ignoring or trying to get rid of our own sins. We know that only you can clean the stains of our souls. May we acknowledge and repent our sins and always turn to you. AMEN.

Let us conclude this message again with the singing of 'The Ballad of Walter Scott'.