Baptism of a Humble Heart



Do any of you know who this man is?

He became a minor celebrity in the two months preceding the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens by expressing his opinion that the danger was exaggerated. While residents were being urged to leave, he said he had no intention of “packing up.” He gave interviews and said, “If the mountain goes, I’m going with it…You couldn’t pull me out with a mule team. The mountain’s part of Truman and Truman’s part of that mountain.”

Truman became something of a folk hero and was the subject of many songs and poems by children. One group of children from Oregon sent him banners that said, “Harry – we love you,” which moved him deeply. Another group of fifth graders from Michigan wrote letters that brought him to tears. He wrote them back and included some volcanic ash from Mount St. Helens.

Articles about this Harry Truman appeared in the New York Times, the San Francisco Examiner and he attracted the attention of National Geographic, the United Press International, and The Today Show. Profiles about Truman also appeared in many magazines, including Time, Life, Field & Stream, and Reader’s Digest. Historian Richard Slatta wrote that Truman was immortalized “with many of the embellished qualities of the western hero.”

On May 17, 1980, fearing an imminent eruption, officials tried to persuade him to leave the mountain. He refused. It was a fatal decision. Mount St. Helens erupted the next morning and its northern flank collapsed.

The largest landslide in recorded history and a pyroclastic flow traveling on top of the landslide engulfed the Spirit Lake area, destroying the lake and burying Harry, the lodge, and his 16 cats under 150 feet of volcanic landslide debris. Harry Truman was 83 years old, one of 57 people to die that day.

At 83 years old, I can understand why Truman didn’t want to move. The campground was his home, it was where he felt comfortable. It was the life he was comfortable with. However, if he wanted to go on living he would have had to change his ways or at least his location.

I use this story as a metaphor to help us understand our relationship to God. As humans, we are most comfortable living our lives as we see fit. In our pride we can become stubborn and unwilling to change. When we recognize signs of trouble in our spiritual lives, it is easiest to just keep doing what we are used to. God, since the earliest of times, has challenged us to change our ways and put our faith in Him so that our souls will be safe with Him forever, even if our body is buried in dirt or ash or even in water. The story of the warnings Harry got reminded me of God’s warnings to the people of Noah’s day.

God had commanded Noah to build a boat (aka Ark) and God’s hope was that the people of the day would heed His warnings and put their faith in His way to safety. There was only one Way that God was going to spare people from the flood. Much like today there is only one way that people can be sure that their spirit will dwell forever with God. Jesus is our Ark. In fact, in Noah’s day the Ark was a picture of who Christ is to us. As Peter writes:

3 Dear friends, this is already the second letter I have written you, in which I am trying to stir up your pure mind by way of reminder: 2 I want you to recall both the predictions foretold by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles. 3 Above all, understand this: In the last days blatant scoffers will come, being propelled by their own evil urges 4 and saying, “Where is his promised return? For ever since our ancestors died, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation.” 5 For they deliberately suppress this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water. 6 Through these things the world existing at that time was destroyed when it was deluged with water. 7 But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, by being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

8 Now, dear friends, do not let this one thing escape your notice, that a single day is like a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years are like a single day. 9 The Lord is not slow concerning his promise, as some regard slowness, but is being patient toward you, because he does not wish for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:1-9 NLT

There were those who scoffed at Noah, they thought he was a fool, but God’s desire was to allow any who would believe to get on that Ark and be spared. However, in the people’s pride they refused the Way to safety. A lot of time has passed since then and God is waiting patiently for any and all who will believe in His Way to safety for all eternity. Belief and trust in Jesus is the Way. As Peter also wrote:

Christ also suffered once for sins,

the just for the unjust,

to bring you to God,

by being put to death in the flesh

but by being made alive in the spirit.

19 In it he went and preached to the spirits in prison,

20 after they were disobedient long ago when God patiently waited in the days of Noah as an ark was being constructed. In the ark a few, that is eight souls, were delivered through water. 21 And this prefigured baptism, which now saves you—not the washing off of physical dirt but the pledge of a good conscience to God—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who went into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels and authorities and powers subject to him.

1 Peter 3:18-22 NLT

Jesus is the Ark for the safety of our spirit. And the safety of our eternal spirit is found by entering one door. As Jesus Himself said:

9 I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will come in and go out, and find pasture.

John 10:9 NLT

So how is it that we can enter the door?

38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.”

Acts 2:38-39 NLT

Likewise Paul and Silas, when asked the same question, said:

31 “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Acts 16:31 NLT

God wants that we would humble ourselves and stop scoffing at His Way to safety. It is one thing to scoff at the way to physical safety like Harry R Truman, but it is much more costly to scoff at our spiritual safety. Before I move any further I would like to share some brief definitions of the Way we enter the Door.

First off I will clarify that when Paul and Silas say “Believe,” repentance and baptism are not separate from belief they are parts of the belief. (Repent and be baptized)

The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary gives the following definition of Repentance--"a complete change of orientation involving a judgment upon the past and a deliberate redirection for the future." A biblical definition of repentance is to make a change of mind, heart, and action, by turning away from sin and self and returning to God. In other words, you change from scoffing at God to seeking His direction for your life.

And baptism, in this case, isn’t necessarily the physical act of being dunked under water. Instead it is the pledge of a believer’s heart to participate in God’s will to cleanse them from their sin. Most believer’s who have made the commitment to allow God to cleanse them will want to participate in the symbolic act of physically being baptized, but ultimately it is the condition of the heart’s pledge that allows God’s Spirit to clean house.

This brings me to the subject of water baptism. As we celebrate Resurrection Sunday this year, on April 9th, we will be having a baptism service. As of right now we have four individuals who would like to confirm their belief in Jesus and pledge their hearts to Him. If you have never been baptized I would like to give you the opportunity to take that step with God on Easter Sunday. The physical act symbolizes what God has done in your life and helps you to remember how God has brought you into the safety of His spiritual Ark, which is Jesus.

Baptism symbolizes these four spiritual realities:

**Union With Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection**

**An Inward Cleansing and Remission of Sins**

**Spirit Given Rebirth and New Life**

**The Permanent Abiding Presence of the Holy Spirit**

Remember simply getting dunked doesn’t save you, (Simon Magnus) instead it is the humble heart that sees the need for the forgiveness and new life that only God can provide. When you come to God with a heart of repentance and a desire for cleansing God will save your soul. And if your soul is safe not even an eruption can snatch you from eternal life with Him. As Paul said:

38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39 NLT