



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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<https://aulc.us>

TITLE: Put Your Whole Self In

SERMON IN A SENTENCE: Baptism represents a total commitment—putting your whole self in.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:4-11

Hello Friends! I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.

I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us this week!

Over the past couple of weeks, we have been looking at John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River.

Today, we will look at baptism and see why God wants everyone to be baptized to show our commitment to Him as well as washing away our sins!

Our scripture lesson today comes from the Gospel of Mark, chapter one verses four to eleven.

Starting at verse four:

John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were flocking to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

John wore a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey.

He was preaching: "Someone more powerful than I will come after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of His sandals.

I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John.

As soon as He came up out of the water, He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending to Him like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven:

You are My beloved Son;

I take delight in You!

May the Lord add His Blessing to the reading of His Word!

There's an old children's song that everyone knows and you even hear it at weddings and other gatherings today!

It goes something like this:

You put your right hand in,
You put your right hand out,
You put your right hand in,
and you shake it all about.

You do the hokey pokey
and you turn yourself around.
That's what it's all about.

You put your right foot in,
You put your right foot out,
You put your right foot in,
and you shake it all about.

You do the hokey pokey
and you turn yourself around.
That's what it's all about.

(Slower & more deliberately)
You put your whole self in,
You put your whole self out,
You put your whole self in,
and you shake it all about.

You do the hokey pokey
and you turn yourself around.

That's what it's all about.

"You put your whole self in." Isn't that a great definition of baptism! That's what baptism is all about—putting our whole selves in. Jesus wants no partial commitments. He wants no disciples who stick their toes in the water to judge its temperature before they finally agree to get involved. He says, "because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16). Jesus wants disciples who are with him all the way.

That's not our way. Some years ago, Arthur Guiterman wrote a poem. He said:

First dentistry was painless;
Then bicycles were chainless
And carriages were horseless
and many laws, enforceless.

Next, cookery was fireless,
Telegraphy was wireless,
Cigars were nicotineless
And coffee, caffeineless.

Soon oranges were seedless,
The putting green was weedless,
The college boy hatless,
The proper diet, fatless.

Now motor roads are dustless,
The latest steel is rustless,
Our tennis courts are sodless,
Our new religions, godless.

Guiterman wrote that almost a century ago, but it could have been written today!

- We do want life painless and chainless.
- We want life fireless and wireless.
- We want life seedless and weedless.
- We want life dustless and rustless.

But life isn't that way, is it?

- Modern dentistry and medicine have made much treatment relatively painless, but we still feel pain. Can anyone claim to live a painless life? Our teeth might not hurt as much, but our hearts break as painfully as ever—and perhaps even more often.
- Modern electronics have gone wireless. Everyone has a cell phone. You can be flying at 35,000 feet over Texas and talk to your friend in Peoria. Our communications have gone wireless. But have we eliminated problems in communication?
- We have developed chemicals to keep our lawns weedless, but those chemicals leach into our streams and reservoirs and threaten to poison us.

- We have made some great strides with regard to rustless. Our cars are being built better and better and are lasting longer and longer—but traffic gets worse and worse—and slower and slower!

Life might get easier, but it never gets easy. Life might get simpler, but it never gets simple. God never promises easy or simple. God's focus is elsewhere. God wants faith and commitment. God wants us "to put our whole self in."

I am reminded of David Livingstone, a great missionary to Africa in the early part of this century. Africa in those days was primitive. Life there was hard.

Livingstone wrote the people back home that great opportunities for ministry existed in Africa. He called Christian people to join him in sharing the gospel of Christ in the uncharted vastness of that continent. A missionary society wrote him a letter saying:

"We have some people who would like to join you.
Do you have some easy access roads to get where you are?"

Livingstone wrote back:

"If you have people who will come
only if there are good roads,
I don't want them.

I want people who will come
even if there is no road at all."

Africa required commitment. Jesus requires commitment. Jesus treasures our commitment. He treasures our willingness to commit our lives to him even though the price might be high.

And the Jesus who asks much also gives much. Sam Shoemaker, the Episcopal priest who helped found Alcoholics Anonymous described the first step that an alcoholic must take to turn his or her life around. He said:

Make an act of self-surrender.
Do this with another if it will help rivet it,
and it very likely will.
But make it.

Gather up your sins and needs,
put them together,
bring them to Christ for forgiveness and help.
Commit yourself to him in an act of dedication.

"Commit yourself!" A friend told me about learning to climb in a rock-climbing facility. Their big wall was fifty feet high. As he neared the top, the wall leaned backwards, so he had to lean backwards too. It was hard—and more than a little scary.

I can remember standing on a diving board that was only ten feet high—but it looked like it was a mile down to the water. If that's what ten feet looks like, what would fifty feet look like—especially when the surface is concrete rather than water. Scary—that's what it would look like.

When he got to the top, the instructor said, "Now let go!"

Let go!?! You've gotta be kidding! Yes, my friend had a harness and a rope, but he had to wonder if they would hold. But finally he did let go—and the instructor brought him safely to the ground. Letting go—placing his life in the hands of his instructor—was the key to his standing on *terra firma* once again.

Faith is like that. They say, "Let go, and let God." Letting go is the hard part. Letting go of the things that we rely on for security. Letting God take the wheel to take us where we need to go. Learning to *want* to go where God leads. That's the challenge of a lifetime.

When Jesus came to see John the Baptist in the wilderness, John was preaching a message of repentance. He was calling people to repent of their sins and to be baptized. Jesus, the only person not to have sinned—the only person not to need repentance—asked John to baptize him.

For two thousand years, people have been asking why he did that. Why did Jesus want to be baptized when he had not sinned—when he had no need of repentance.

Perhaps the answer is that he was leading by example. He wanted us to be baptized, and so he was baptized himself. He wanted us to "put our whole self in," and so he put his whole self in.

Baptism is about commitment. It is about putting our whole selves in. It is about saying to God, "Here I am. Make me what you want. Send me where you will."

Paul described baptism as a death and rebirth. Jesus wants us to die to our old life so that he can re-create us in a new life. Paul says:

"Don't you know that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus
were baptized into his death?"

We were buried therefore with him through baptism to death,
that just like Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father,
so we also might walk in newness of life.

For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death,
we will also be part of his resurrection"
(Romans 6:3-5)

How could anyone ask more than that—that we die? How can anyone give more than that—a whole new life? That is what Christ promises to those who follow him.

Where are you with Christ? What are you willing to give him? An hour on Sundays? A few dollars now and then? He wants more. He wants your heart. If you give him your heart, he will take it into his workshop and repair the breaks. Then he will give your heart back to you, strong and new.

Today, if you have been baptized, we invite you to review your baptism and your relationship to Christ. Have you given him what you promised at baptism? Have you really given him the opportunity to make something wonderful of you? If not, think what you are missing. Give your heart to Christ, and surrender your self to him. Let him make more of you than you could ever make of yourself.

If you have not been baptized, we invite you to say to Christ:

"Give me a new heart, O Lord.
Put a new spirit within me.
Take away my heart of stone,
and give me a heart of flesh."
(Adapted from Ezekiel 36:26)

That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!

Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!

Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

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