



2nd Sunday After Epiphany – January 17/18/19, 2026

Preacher: Pastor Scott Oelhafen

Sermon Theme: “God Uses the Ordinary to Accomplish the Extraordinary”

Sermon Text: Colossians 2: 6-15

⁶So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. ⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces^[a] of this world rather than on Christ. ⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh^[b] was put off when you were circumcised by^[c] Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you^[d] alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.^[e]

Dear fellow member of God's family,

Imagine if you were a doctor, frantically searching for a cure for cancer. Now imagine if you found that cure for cancer. What do you think that cure would be worth? Millions, maybe billions? Certainly, you'd be up for the *Nobel Peace Prize* or two. Think about it: the cure for cancer would save millions of lives, maybe even billions from certain death. And in a sense, that cure would give new life to people who were as good as dead. The Bible teaches us that the sacrament of baptism does even more. No, baptism isn't the cure for cancer. Baptism is a cure for a much worse disease, the damning disease of our sin. It's a cure every single person on this planet needs. And God makes that cure available, for everyone free of charge: to young and old, rich and poor. It's more than just a sign or a symbol. As 1 Peter, chapter 3 assures us: **“Baptism now saves.”** On the one side of the coin, baptism delivers from death, eternal death. Just like water washes

away dirt, in baptism, God literally washes away all sins. And on the flip side, baptism gives saving faith and new life in Christ, to people like us who were as good as dead, spiritually speaking. Now, we are alive, literally born again.

What's involved in Baptism? Well Roman Emperors drank it and we wash and cook with it. The "it" I'm referring to is water -- something so simple, so ordinary. Yet, we cannot live without it. Scientists say that there is exactly the same amount of water on earth today as there was in the time of Adam and Eve. Water is said to cover more than 2/3rd of the earth's surface. For such an ordinary resource, God uses it to play a remarkable role in both our physical and spiritual lives. This is just another example how **God Uses the Ordinary to Accomplish the Extraordinary**.

Remove the head coach, and the team flounders; break the fuel line, and the car won't run; unplugged, the microwave has no power; and without the head, the body dies. Whether for leadership, power, or life, ordinary connections are vital. The book of Colossians is a book about connections, connections with God and each other. Writing from prison, Paul highlighted these spiritual connections. He also battled false teachings that had infiltrated this growing Colossian church. Sadly, some members of this church tried to combine Jewish and pagan philosophies with Christian truth. In effect, these false teachers were saying: "Knowing Jesus Christ and the Bible isn't enough to be saved. You need more." For them, their ordinary Bibles weren't good enough. Paul hit that false teaching head on when he said: ***⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces^[a] of this world rather than on Christ.*** Human philosophy of: I know better or buy low, and sell high might work in the classroom or in the stock exchange. But, the human philosophy of depending on yourself, your finances, and your reason, instead of depending on God and His Word won't work, for time or for eternity.

Instead, Paul put it this way: ***⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,*** Paul spends the whole letter of Colossians saying: *depend only on your relationship with Jesus. He's all we need for a full life now. He's all we need for an eternity in heaven.* Yes, **God Uses the Ordinary to Accomplish the Extraordinary**. Think about it. God's only Son, took on ordinary human flesh and was born in an ordinary stable, lived in the ordinary community of Israel, and took

12 ordinary men as His disciples. But, Jesus accomplished extraordinary things, for us and in our place. His extraordinary life earned us heaven. His extraordinary death on the cross paid our debt of sins in full. And His extraordinary resurrection guaranteed we will rise again. Most certainly, **God Uses the Ordinary to Accomplish the Extraordinary.**

I said before that the book of Colossians is a book of connections. Listen to how we are connected to God. Paul said: *1¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh^[b] was put off when you were circumcised by^[c] Christ, 1² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.* I'd like especially to ask the kids sitting in this service: how do you know who your family is? How do you know whose car you're going to ride in to get home after this service? You don't need a ID card, do you?. Just look at your name, and that's how you know. Your name is your mark, your identification. In other words, your name tells you who your family is. In Old Testament days, every Israelite male knew that they belonged to God's family because they were circumcised. That was their mark, their identification to be the people of God. Well, God doesn't require anyone to be circumcised on the 8th day to make us part of His family. Instead, God has given us the gift of baptism. Did you know last year, the ministers at St. Paul's baptized more than 40 children and adults? And we have room for one more. What miracles. We can have them so often, they can tend to be so common, so ordinary. But, believe me, and believe God, each Baptism is special. Each one isn't ordinary. They are extraordinary. For God has told us in Matthew 28:19-20 **to go and make disciples of all nations, by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.** In baptism, God literally connects us to Jesus. In baptism, earth is connected to heaven; sinners are connected to the Savior. As Jesus died to sin, so in baptism, sin's power in our flesh is destroyed and buried. As Jesus rose, so in baptism a resurrection to a new life of faith takes place. Most of us were only a few weeks or months old when we were baptized. For us it seems so ordinary. But, in Baptism, God takes ordinary application of water and makes it extraordinary. It's extra ordinary because of the blessings it brings. Baptism actually pipelines to us God's forgiveness of sins, new life, and salvation.

So why do we need the gift of baptism? Paul goes on to say there was a time:¹³ ***When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh.*** Physically speaking, when we're born into this world, we may be kicking and screaming, we may be able to see just fine, and we may be the sweetest babies you ever met. But, the Bible clearly teaches that spiritually speaking: all people are spiritually dead, blind, and enemies of God. Baptism changes all that, and connects us to Jesus. Not only do we need to baptize our kids for the forgiveness of their sins, we need to, as the rest of Matthew 28:20 says: ***teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.*** Folks, baptism isn't a one time magic act. If it were, our Board of Outreach and ministers would take a hose and spray water on every one we meet, thinking we've done our job. Instead, God tells us to both baptize and teach our kids God's Word when we're at home, at school, even on vacation. Whether you are a parent, aunt/uncle, grandma/or grandpa, we need to share God's Word with our kids and model that Word in our own lives.

Even though our baptism may have taken place long ago, we can still draw real strength from it. But, don't make the same mistake that many have. Don't just put your baptism certificate away in a drawer and forget about it. If you do, you'll miss out. Instead, let's remember what Baptism means every day. It means we're forgiven – the devil can no longer accuse us. It means God has made us part of His family – sin isn't worth it. Baptism means that we are on the winning side – God's side and may we live for Him.

So, let's keep praying for the cure for cancer. But don't ever forget that God has given us a blessing in baptism that is worth more than anything else. God uses the ordinary to accomplish the extraordinary. So like the apostle Paul said to those first century Christians: ***6So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*** May God bless you by reminding you of your Baptism and that you matter to Jesus always. Amen.