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## *I Baptize You*

You have seen a baby being baptized in church.

The parents sat in front of everyone, close to the pulpit. There may have been someone else there too, holding the baby. Before the actual ceremony the Form for Baptism was read. You may have felt bored while the reading of the Form by the minister went on and on. When at last the reading of the Form was finished and the minister had led in prayer, the little child was baptized. The familiar words were then spoken: “I baptize you into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” What a wonderful moment! The congregation was perfectly silent; everyone was looking at that little group: the parents, with their little baby and the minister. After the minister had spoken those familiar words, a psalm was sung, a prayer was said, and the ceremony was over.

You have grown familiar with all this. It happens so often. And yet...

And yet every baptism ceremony is a wonderful occasion. The words spoken to the little child are of enormous importance. This is what we will talk about. It will not be complicated. We will see in a very simple way what it means to have been baptized.

You must not forget that your parents once stood with you at the baptismal font. The minister pronounced over you those very same words, though you did not understand them at the time: “I baptize you into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

That was a moving moment for your parents. It was an important moment for you, too, even though you were so young. **God** was speaking to you, and he said, “I baptize you...”

## *Word and Sacraments*

In addition to his Word, the LORD has given us two sacraments, holy baptism and holy supper. Holy baptism is administered to the children of the congregation whereas the holy supper may be celebrated by all those who have publicly professed their faith.

Perhaps you have asked yourself: “But why do we actually have these sacraments? Is the Bible not enough?” Let us consider why the Lord has instituted these sacraments. First of all, let us examine the word “sacrament” which signifies “holy means.” A sacrament is therefore a means which God wishes to use, a means which God has sanctified.

Question and answer 66 of the Heidelberg Catechism teach us the actual meaning of the sacraments. Here we read that the sacraments are:

holy, visible signs and seals. They were instituted by God so that by their use He might the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel. And this is the promise: God graciously grants us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life because of the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross.

The sacraments are therefore signs and seals. What is a sign? A sign represents or shows something. The swaying of branches indicates wind, while smoke indicates fire. In both cases we deal with signs of nature which God has created. However, there are also signs which have not always been there, but which have been specially instituted. When we see a red light, we automatically stop. In the same way the sacraments are also signs, specially instituted by God.

Through these signs the LORD wants to make something clear to us. That is his will. He wants to show his rich promises revealed to us in his Word, so