

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Romans 6:3-11: "Out with the Old! In with the New!"

July 18/19, 2020 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

+ + +

Merciful Lord, cleanse and defend Your Church by the sacrifice of Christ. United with Him in Holy Baptism, give us grace to receive with thanksgiving the fruits of His redeeming work and daily follow in His way; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*Pastoral Care Companion*, p. 586)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the sixth chapter of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. / For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. / Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. ^(ESV)

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who renews us every day by His grace and forgiveness, dear fellow redeemed:

In this sinful world where things fall apart, break down, and decay, there is always something that needs replacing. The car that ran so well 50,000 or 150,000 miles ago is now parked for good in the junk yard. The top of the line smartphone you purchased a few years back seems to have aged as quickly as dogs do. "Out with the old! In with the new!" we say. Our society, more than many before us, is a disposable society. We love our things, and we also love to discard them for newer and better things.

In our country these days, this approach to things is also being applied to systems. We hear voices calling out more and more loudly that the old systems of governance, from local law enforcement to the founding principles of our country, need to be thrown out in favor of something new. "We can build something fairer and more just! We can cleanse out the bad! We can end all prejudice and discrimination! Out with the old! In with the new!"

While we might sympathize with some of the goals of these modern-day revolutionaries, we know that the problem is not so much the system of government in America. Granting that there is no perfect system devised by men, the people in this country enjoy more personal freedom than perhaps at any other time in history. The problem is not the system; the problem is sin. Our sin is what causes us to look down on others because their color or their culture are not like ours. Our sin shows itself in anger, hatred, and judgment toward those whom we should rather love as God commands us to do.

Our sin is the “old” that should concern us more than anything else. There is no forming a “more perfect Union” (Preamble to the U. S. Constitution) or improving our own life unless we deal with the rotting root deep inside us. The fifth chapter of the Letter to the Romans tells us how sin came to be buried in us. Paul writes that “*sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin*” (Rom. 5:12). Because Adam sinned, all his descendants inherited sin after him. “[B]y the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners” (v. 19).

There is nothing we can do to stop this transmission of sin. The hymnwriter describes our desperate state: “By Adam’s fall is all forlorn / Man’s nature and his thinking, / The poison’s there when we are born, / In sin yet deeper sinking” (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* #430, v. 1). This is hard for us to accept. We don’t want to believe that before we had a chance at living life, we were already poisoned with sin.

But as hard as it is to believe, God tells us that when we were born—looking so vibrant and full of life—we were actually dead. We were dead in our sins (Eph. 2:1,5). Many people go through life never realizing how bad they have it. In their later years, they look back on their accomplishments and imagine they lived a pretty good life. But these poor souls never really lived. Their life was lived apart from Jesus, which means that even though their heart was beating, their brain was working, and they were getting stuff done, they weren’t really living. They were dying, only dying, and death is all they had to look forward to.

Jesus came to put an end to that futility, to reverse the poisonous effects of sin. He was the second Adam, the only-begotten Son of God the Father who became a man in the womb of the virgin Mary. His goal in coming was not to topple the Roman government or achieve social justice for all. It wasn’t to set up a new religion. His purpose was to fulfill the promises of God, spoken in ancient times even to the first sinners. He did not come to throw out the old order and replace it with something else. “*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets,*” He said; “*I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them*” (Mat. 5:17).

He fulfilled God’s Law for you and me. He accomplished what we never could—a perfect life before God. Adam’s disobedience made us sinners, but Jesus’ obedience earned our righteousness. Then He took all our acts of disobedience, all our sin, and brought them to the cross where He paid the atoning price for each and every one. This is where He personally dealt with all hatred, all prejudice, all injustice, all division. All of it was wiped away in the flood of His precious blood. And then He dealt with death by rising from the grave. He addressed our disobedience with His obedience, our sin with His sacrifice, and our death with His resurrection.

But how can we connect our life to the life that He won? How can we leave behind our legacy of sin inherited from the first Adam and enter into the blessed company of the second Adam? Some say that this is done through a personal decision: "I've decided to leave my life of sin and live for Jesus." Others say it is more of a process, a gradual changing and growth away from bad things and toward good things. But both of those are done from our side of things, by our effort, which means that both approaches will most certainly fail.

Today's text describes a different way. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul writes, *"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?"* Here something is introduced that did not come from man and is not accomplished by us. This is Baptism, instituted by Jesus for the salvation of all people and carried out by His power and command (Mat. 28:18-19). It is not symbolic. The water does not symbolize the washing away of sin. The water and the Word of Baptism actually cleanse us from sin by joining us to Jesus.

Baptism into Christ is a baptism into His death. This means that the benefit of Jesus' death is applied to the sinner. And what benefit is that? Forgiveness, the full and free forgiveness of all sin. This is why we bring infants to the font. It is because they are born in sin (Psa. 51:5). They need to be forgiven, so that they might live in Christ. Sin does not live in Jesus; therefore our sin must be forgiven if we are to live in Him.

But Baptism does even more for us. It not only joins us with Jesus' atoning death, it also joins us with Jesus' glorious resurrection. *"Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him."* For us who are baptized into Christ, death no longer has dominion over us. Death is not our lord anymore. Death is not the boss.

The two major problems in our life—sin and death—are dealt with at the baptismal font where Jesus meets us with His eternal blessings. It may not look like much happens at Baptism. Nothing changes in the appearance of the person who was baptized. But Baptism is an **"Out with the Old! In with the New!"** moment like no other. In the waters of Baptism our old Adam, our inherited sinful nature, is drowned. And our new life of faith rises to the surface. In another one of his letters, Paul writes, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come"* (2Co. 5:17).

Sadly we do not always live as we are. Even though we know we should leave the old sins of the past behind us, covered by Jesus' righteousness and cleansed by His blood, yet those old sins still hold some appeal. The devil tempts us to think that the old and new can coexist. "Just because we have faith doesn't mean we have to stop having fun," we say. And this is how we so easily find our way back to old passions, old habits, and old vices.

But you cannot live for Adam and for Jesus. You cannot feed the sin and expect righteousness to survive. You cannot despise the blessings of your Baptism and remain in Christ. Paul writes that *"our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."*

You live in your Baptism by repenting every day of the sin that threatens to overcome you and destroy your faith. Repentance is how you "come clean," so to speak. It is how you toss out the

old, how you walk away from everything that draws, tempts, and pulls you away from your Savior Jesus. And every day you welcome the new by trusting in Jesus, hearing His saving Gospel, clinging to His promises, and striving by the power of the Holy Spirit to live the way God has called you to live.

The people of the world keep breaking down and building up in an attempt to create something that will last. But all their possessions, plans, and power are doomed to fail. All those new things will become old and be discarded in the landfill of history. Baptism gives you something that lasts. It gives you what you could never produce on your own. Baptism ties your past, present, and future to Jesus. It gives you the forgiveness and life He won. It gives you the comfort and peace of knowing you are a child of God. And it assures you that when this life comes to an end, you will live on as Jesus does.

No matter how many years are behind you or how long ago you were baptized, the blessings of Baptism never get old. In Baptism you were crucified and buried with Christ. You were raised with Christ. There His death became your death, and His life became your life. In Baptism, *"[t]he old has passed away; behold, the new has come."*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

+ + +