

Prayer of the Day:

Father in heaven, at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Keep us who are baptized into Christ faithful in our calling as your children and make us heirs with him of everlasting life; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased. Alleluia. (Mark 1:11b cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

These words have always made me wonder if Paul was ever frustrated in the ministry. Can you imagine? He spends five chapters in the letter to the Romans recapping the grace, the unfathomable love and forgiveness of God that would free us from the condemnation of the Law which we have failed to keep. The pure mercy which not only freed us from condemnation but called us righteous because of what Christ had done and through no righteousness we ourselves had earned. The incomprehensible joy and peace in knowing that regardless of what this world may throw at us heaven is our home and then what must he say? *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?*

Doesn't it make you want to scream? What was the reaction of some? If Paul had to say it then there were those who thought, "Well awesome! Then if all of this is free, then I can just sin some more. We'll pile that on Jesus too there at the cross and in the end, all that really happens is that God became even more gracious. No downside!" Wow ... right?!

It completely misses the mark even of rational thought, but it certainly doesn't understand the danger of sin and what it seeks to do. Isaiah the prophet just ten chapters after our lesson today announced the danger that sin poses. "*Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear*" (Isa. 59:1-2). This is what sin does. Maybe not at first, but it works its way in between us and God. It may seem like no big deal at first but slowly surely the guilt builds up, the shame leads to decreased time with God. The guilt will even seek to justify itself growing angry with God over time. It's like a ticking time bomb waiting for that last and ill-fated moment and then? Well, Ezekiel said it, "*The soul who sins is the one who will die*" (Ezekiel 18:20). Oh no, dear friends sin is poison. It is a tool of satan which corrodes and weakens faith. It is not a toy to be trifled with. But before we despair of the times we too have added to the weight of sin which Christ bore for us upon the cross, Paul beautifully connects us to Christ once again.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? It took a second, but we got there! Baptism! On this Sunday upon

Lesson: Romans 6:1-11

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. — NIV

which we celebrate the Baptism of Christ, His anointing or public declaration into the work He had come to do which was solely and squarely aimed at us. Dear friends, it's our baptism, that connects us to Him. Connects us to Him in some truly awe-inspiring ways. As the Spirit worked faith in our hearts, we died! Now I know that sounds crazy and bad at first but follow the rest of this section.

⁴ *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.* ⁵ *If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.* ⁶ *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—* ⁷ *because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.*

Follow? We were not forgiven so that we could sin all the more. In Baptism, our sinful natures were fixed to the cross with Jesus. There He paid for our sins, past, present, future. That wicked old sinner was buried in the tomb with Christ so that you and I might be free. That we might be done with him, rid of him and his guilt and shame God removed all that separated us from Him. It would be ludicrous to run back to it. It would be the height of folly to intentionally seek sin over what God gives next.

He's already said so tightly is the resurrection connected to the cross and tomb but so it is with us as well. We died to sin so that we might be new. That we might have new life. ⁸ *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.* ⁹ *For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.* ¹⁰ *The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.* ¹¹ *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

Just as the death of our sinful nature comes in connection to our Baptisms, so also we are connected to the empty tomb of Jesus. In our new life, connected to Christ, our foes no longer hold mastery over us. Slaves no longer to sin, death, or devil, we are free to live for God. The Gospel changes us, enlightens us, revives us!

What does this look like? Freed from sin we are freed to follow God, His Word, His will in our lives. This not because we have to earn or deserve anything but because we understand the joy it is to be a child of God. Thankful for all Christ has done, all our Triune God has done, we would never think to return to the sin Christ has freed us from. We will war against it.

Martin Luther once said that whenever he felt the temptations of the devil, the world, or his own sinful flesh pressing down upon him, he would blurt out, "*Leave me alone satan, for I am a baptized child of Christ!*" The point is simple. In recalling his baptism, he remembered that his old slavery was gone. He no longer needed to listen to the temptations which swirled around him. He was freed to live for God with each passing day, every moment of existence.

So it is for You dear child of Christ! Baptized and saved, connected to the death and resurrection of Jesus you are freed to live for Christ! And what does that look like? I'm guessing you see it when you look in the mirror. Whenever, we live our lives devoted to Christ and His glory. Whenever, we are the best Christian whatever we are. When we show love to our family members, to our friends, to the neighbor down the street. We are living for God. Not to earn anything, that could never be. But in thanks! In thanks to God for all He has done for us. This is our teaching on vocation.

So dear friends, on a Sunday we hear of the baptism of Jesus, we remember our own and everything they mean for us. Yes, you are a baptized child of Christ. Baptized into Him, you were baptized into death. Baptized into Him, you were baptized into life! May we live them to His glory. Amen.