

Sermon – Romans 6.3-11 (Trinity 6 – 2024)

Dead to Unrighteousness, Alive to Righteousness

Let us pray: Lord God, heavenly Father, we confess that we are poor, wretched sinners, and that there is no good in us; our hearts, flesh and blood being so corrupted by sin that we are never in this life without sinful lusts and desires. Therefore we beseech You, dear Father, forgive us these sins, and let Your Holy Spirit so cleanse our hearts that we may desire and love Your Word, abide by it, and thus by Your grace be forever saved; through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,

⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin.

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

¹⁰ For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.

¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

These are Your words heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

The scribes and Pharisees didn't see themselves as slaves of sin. Sin wasn't a master to them in their mind. Those Commandments that they read in Exodus, the very same ones we read today, they believed that they were completely free to keep them. And they thought they did. They thought that they were able to rise above the desires to sin, and have a righteousness of their own, keeping the Commandments, and meriting a place in the kingdom of heaven.

This is a denial of original sin. Original sin is the fallen condition of our human nature, passed down through the generations. Our human nature is so corrupted by sin, there remains nothing good in us, just as Paul says, "**I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful flesh**" (Romans 7:18). We are completely bound under the power of sin. And the law of God, summed up by the Commandment exposes that corrupted nature. Jesus expounds on the meaning of the law in our Gospel reading to show us that we have not kept it, and we are not able to keep it.

You think that you do not murder? You think that you keep the 5th Commandment? Have you, possessing disdain in your heart toward your neighbor, called him a fool? That's not a little slip of the mind or the tongue. Though your hands cause no harm, you still have the heart, the mind, and the mouth of a murderer. This is the dead fruit of original sin, worthy of eternal condemnation.

The Commandments show us that original sin with which we were born. The Commandments show us that we do not have the power to overcome our sin, or the ability to achieve a righteousness of our own that merits an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. The Commandments do not take it easy on us. It stops our mouths. It stops our excuses. It calls us out on our wicked thoughts, words, and deeds, and labels us idolators, narcissists, rebels, murderers, adulterers, thieves, gluttons, liars, slanderers, coveters, and so on.

We who are born with original sin need salvation from our slavery to sin. We need to find righteousness somewhere else.

Our epistle reading tells us where this salvation and righteousness is to be found. It is found in Baptism. Paul asks the question: "**Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?**" He asks the question challenging the hearers. "Are you ignorant of this important fact? Do you not know this?"

Some do not know this. Recently, I heard the story about a man who became a member of one of our Synod's churches. His parents belong to an Evangelical Free Church. They think that their son has fallen away from the faith, because he believes that baptism saves. They accuse him of believing in works righteousness. They think that baptism is a work of man, and that through the performance of this work, man earns merits salvation before God. They think that we replace Jesus with baptism.

But let's understand this correctly, that we may see how we may obtain our justifying righteousness in baptism.

Is baptism a work that we do? Is it something that we perform as though it is a work that merits God's favor? No! Baptism is a means that Jesus instituted by which He makes us partakers of the salvation that He has won for us. Jesus alone is our Savior. In baptism, God is active, not us. In the passages of our text, the verbs, *baptized, buried, crucified, brought to nothing, has been freed* are all passive verbs. God is doing the action. We are receiving the action. God, through baptism, makes us partakers of the salvation, that Jesus, our only Savior, has won for us.

How can we read the words of Paul and say that nothing really happens in Baptism? In your baptism something indeed did happen. The Holy Spirit united you to Christ. You were joined to His death and resurrection. You were joined to the righteous Son of God. He is the innocent One, the One who kept every last one of the Commandments in thought Word and deed. The innocent, divine Christ went to the cross, bearing all our unrighteousness, all the guilt of our original sin and all their filthy fruits. Jesus paid for it with His blood. He paid for it with His life. He paid every last penny of punishment. His death has saved you, and so how blessed it is to be joined to His saving death through baptism. This means that you have died to sin. You have been freed from its bondage. You are freed from its curse, having been forgiven all your sins. Baptism joins us to Christ, so it is true for us what Jeremiah had foretold: **"In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"** (Jer 23:6).

Jesus is our righteousness. He has removed my sins. He is the righteousness that makes me favored before God and gives me a place in the kingdom of heaven. Baptism has placed me in that blessed relationship with Jesus, that I am washed clean by His blood and am clothed in His righteousness. No longer am I condemned by the Commandments. Those awful titles it has given me have been removed by Jesus, my righteousness. No longer can I be called a murderer, idolator, or slanderer, etc. Now I have the title as the justified, the righteous, a saint of God. All this is a gift of God given to us when we were joined to Jesus' death and resurrection in Baptism.

So not only do we have the righteousness of Christ imputed to you through faith, but since you are joined to Jesus' resurrection, you are alive to God in Christ Jesus. You have a new life in Christ. Your body once given completely into the service of sin, is no longer a slave to sin, but is now redeemed by Christ. Your body is now a living member in the body of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit. Your body, your life now lives in service of your gracious Lord, so that you rejoice in the goodness of the Commandments. You are glad to live in the righteousness which is ours in Christ. His righteousness alone saves us. And so as a result, we leave that bondage to sin behind us, and look forward to live in accordance to that righteousness of God. We get to be worshippers of God, hearers of the Word, faithful children and spouses, lovers of the brethren, protector of our neighbors' goods and name, and also a grateful people.

Though we are no longer under the power and slavery of sin, we know that we still have that corrupted flesh. We still have that inherited sinful flesh. The Commandments remind us of that. But remember, "You are baptized." Repent of your sin, hear the good news of Christ's forgiveness and righteousness, receive His holy Supper. For Jesus sake, you are forgiven all of your sins. You are clothed in His righteousness. You are saved from sin and it's bondage, and you are alive to God in Christ Jesus! Through Jesus' righteousness, which is yours through faith, you have a place in the kingdom of heaven! Amen.

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.