

Trinity Lutheran Church, Gillette, WY
January 13, 2007

Baptized: Beloved Children of God

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. The text for the sermon this morning comes from the Epistle, which was read earlier.

Listen to these words from the Collect of the Day again: “Make all who are baptized in His name faithful in their calling as Your children and inheritors with Him of everlasting life.”

We are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. When we are baptized, we are brought into the kingdom of God, through water and the Word of God. We are baptized into the Father, who created us. We are baptized into the Son, who redeemed us with His perfect life and death for us. We are baptized into the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us and makes us holy and gives to us faith.

Paul says in our text for today, “*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*” That sounds pretty weird. Baptism is a wonderful gift of new life; so how does new life come from something as ugly as death? We don’t hear much about giving the gift of death. Perhaps that’s due to our realization that death is really not much of a gift. At least, it’s not a gift we’d typically want, and with good reason: death is our enemy. But today, St. Paul speaks to us about Holy Baptism in such a way that in Holy Baptism, Christ bestows on us the gifts of His death and resurrection.

In His death, we have received life. It was Christ’s gift of death for all people so that all people may have the gift of newness of life found only in Him. His sacrificial

death is a gift for all humanity. He lays down His life of His own choice. He can lay it down and take it up again; no one can take it from Him. He chose to lay down His life for the Father and His creation, a creation made in the image of God, but through sin, became separated from God. He gave His life in spite of what Satan offered to Him: kingdoms and power and eternal glory. He already had all of that through the Father: the heavenly kingdom, the New Jerusalem; the power of life, in His body and blood; the eternal glory, that of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

He was willing to become a servant and be obedient to His Father, *“he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”* He had the choice of life or death, yet He chose death because of you. He chose death because of your sins. He chose death because you are God’s creation. He chose death because by His death, you might be called sons of God. This sacrifice of Christ is not due to any of humanity’s deserving, for we all lack such merit, something which Paul pointedly reminds us of: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. **And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that non one may boast.**”*

Since Christ has died for us, His resurrection has won for humanity gifts beyond measure.

The first gift which Christ’s resurrection has won for us is the fact that humanity’s archenemies have been defeated. Sin is no longer master over humanity. The Old Adam, while he tries to reassert himself, has been replaced by the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, who has lived and died, committing no sin, yet taking our sin upon Himself. Death has been defeated, once and for all. The grave now stands open and the grave, which once kept our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is now empty. Satan, who once held the keys of

this kingdom in his hands, has now been relieved of those keys, and Christ is now in full control of the keys of the kingdom.

Christ's resurrection promises to us humanity life everlasting with Him. That means being confident in knowing that His reign is endless, not bound by anything, including death, because He has defeated death. He is able to make and fulfill all promises to mankind, namely, *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."*

How does one go about receiving all that Christ has to offer? All this He offers freely through Baptism. All this He offers to each and every one of you. As baptized children of God, we die to sin. Does that mean that we no longer sin? Of course not! What that means is that the Gospel of Christ provides motivation for upright living, a motivation that far surpasses the fear of the Law which the unbeliever works with. A Christian's motivation is nothing less than God's love in Christ. Moreover, when a Christian comes to faith he "dies to sin." Our old, sinful natures inherited from our Old Adam are drowned. Though the Old Adam rears his ugly head, we have the assurance that our sins have been forgiven and those sins sink to the bottom of the font and are washed away and that the New Adam of Jesus Christ rises anew in us.

Through Christ and the wonderful gift He has given to us in and through Holy Baptism, we are made *"alive in God in Christ Jesus."* The baptized children of God have been redeemed from sin and its total depravity. As St. Paul says, *"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."* We have a new, sinless nature

created in us. We are able to live free and eternally in newness of life. The purpose and power of baptism is to make us Christlike. We were baptized that we might live a new kind of life, a life totally different from our old way of life, which was doomed by sin. Through baptism we have entered real life – life filled to the brim with God’s love, forgiveness, power and guidance. It is impossible, by definition, for the new man to desire a life of sin, as recorded by St. John: *“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.”*

As baptized children of God, you and I are sealed with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption. We are marked as ones ransomed by Christ. It is by Christ’s perfect life, death and resurrection that we are ransomed by Christ. It is by Christ’s shed blood on the cross that you and I received redemption of our sins. It is by Christ and Christ alone that we are made children and heirs of the Father. It is the baptized children of God that are promised full redemption, to be perfectly renewed at the Last Day and raised incorruptible to live with Christ forever.

Holy Baptism is all about gifts: gifts from God our Father to His beloved children, once created in His image but who have since fallen away. The gifts include death – namely, the death of Jesus Christ, to give you life. The gifts include life – new life given to you once your sins have been forgiven and you receive the title bestowed on humanity at Creation: children of God.

Thanks be to God, the gifts which have been given to us – the gifts of Christ’s death and resurrection and our newness of life – are real and have been given to you and I. Victorious over all of your enemies, Christ bestows His gifts on you through Holy

Baptism. For you, the baptized children of God have been united with your Savior in both His death and His resurrection, so that you may share in life everlasting. That is your inheritance, the ultimate gift of Baptism, new life in Christ Jesus and the right to be called children of God. In Jesus' name, amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, amen.