

Trinity Lutheran Church, Gillette, WY
February 10, 2008

Two Adams: Death and Life

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.

What is sin? “Sin is every thought, desire, word, and deed which is contrary to God’s Law.” That is one of the questions which comes from the Explanation of the Small Catechism. It makes a note: “Other names for sin are *disobedience; debts; wickedness, rebellion; fault; trespass; wickedness; and wrong.*” Sin has infected all of creation. That is just what it is, an infection. An infection spreads, taking something that is healthy and then passing on a disease. That disease which is passed on is death. That is what Paul tells us in our text. He says, “*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...*” “Death” indicates an inclusive death, both the temporal and eternal results of sin. From the moment of Adam’s transgression, he was spiritually dead, and the germ of physical death was in his nature. Through that one man, death has now “come down” to all. Like each son in a family who is included in his father’s will and receives a share of the estate, we have received this damning legacy from Adam.

Sin is a real thing. It has affected all of us, whether we want to admit it or not. In the end, we will all succumb to the effect of sin: death. “*For the wages of sin is death...*” Death has come for many before us. Death is coming up for us. Death will come for many after us. It is inevitable. As a surgeon told some seminarians in a lecture on the

progress of medical science, “Do not forget...that with all this advancement, the mortality rate remains at **100%**.”

Many will try to argue the point that in order to be a sinner, one must actively go out and sin. That definition of “sinner” is not found in Scripture. As a prince does not become a prince, but is born one and has no choice, so we had no choice; we were conceived and born in sin. David writes, “*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*” Although we had nothing to do with our becoming sinners, we are not thereby absolved of our responsibility, not even as infants. Adam’s sin has rendered the entire human race unable not to sin and has made all of us guilty before God, that is, liable to His punishment. The hymn writer Lazarus Spengler says it all too well what has happened to mankind: “*All mankind fell in Adam’s fall; One common sin infects us all. From one to all the curse descends, And over all God’s wrath impends.*”

Like it or not, you and I and all mankind are sinners. It’s not something that we’re proud of and it’s not something that we like to admit; however, that is who we are. All of that is owed to our ancestor Adam. Through Adam, we are born with what is called original sin, “*that total corruption of our whole human nature which we have inherited from Adam through our parents.*” Original sin “*has brought guilt and condemnation to all people; has left everyone without true fear and love of God, that is, spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God; causes everyone to commit all kinds of actual sins.*” We are guilty and condemned people. We are guilty of our trespasses against God and neighbor. Because of our sin, we are condemned – condemned to a life of eternal separation from God. Because of that separation, we are enemies of God.

Remember what happened to Adam and Eve once they sinned? God kicked them out of the Garden of Eden and placed angels with flaming swords at the gate so they could never enter the Garden again. You and I cannot enter that heavenly realm because we are enemies of God.

Just prior to our text, Paul tells the Church at Rome, *“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”* While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God. Because of the sin which Adam committed, God sent His Son into the world to buy back what was lost, you and me. Earlier I mentioned a stanza from a hymn which records for us mankind’s fall. Several stanzas later, he writes this: *“As by one man all mankind fell And, born in sin, was doomed to hell, So by one Man, who took our place, We all were justified by grace.”* What was done for us was done by the grace of God. Through the grace of God, He sent His one and only begotten Son into this sin-filled world to redeem it. It is by Christ’s life, death and resurrection that we have life and life everlasting. As the hymnist wrote, *“So by one Man, who took our place...”* Jesus Christ did indeed take our place. He took our place in this sinful world. He took our place in the eternal damnation that was ours due to our sin. In turn, we took His place. We took His place in heaven, with the Father as His beloved children. We took His place in that we are seen as white as snow, pure and holy.

By His death and resurrection, we were redeemed. Through the gift of Holy Baptism, we were made children of the heavenly Father. *“We are all conceived and born sinful and are under the power of the devil until Christ claims us as His own. We would be lost forever unless delivered from sin, death, and everlasting condemnation. But the*

Father of all mercy and grace has sent His Son Jesus Christ, who atoned for the sin of the whole world, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

For those who believe and are baptized, we have received everlasting life. We have had our sinful life taken away from us. We have been given a new life, a life in Christ. What did we do to deserve this new life? We had our first parents who sinned and passed that sin down to us. We sin and continue to pass that sin to our descendants. We do nothing but sin, yet have been given a free gift from God our Father. It is through that gift which we were made children of God.

Through that free gift of God, given to us in Jesus Christ, more will be given to us than we could ever imagine. Paul says, *“If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.”* This doesn’t mean that you will receive riches beyond your wildest dreams here on earth. It doesn’t mean that if you pray for it hard enough, then you will get what you want. What it means is that you will receive abundance of grace which comes from God. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith.”* We don’t have faith. It is by the grace of God that the Holy Spirit gives to us faith. Through the abundance of grace, we have been given new life. Through the abundance of grace, we have been given the right to be called sons and daughters of the heavenly Father. Through the abundance of grace, you and I have been made clean by the blood of the Lamb.

Through Adam, *“many were made sinners.”* Through Christ, *“the many will be made righteous.”* God declares to us that we are not guilty, not by what we have done,

but what the Son of God has done for us. In Jesus' name, amen. Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in faith, amen.