

Sermon Draft

Text: Romans 6:1–18

Sermon: “New Life”

Baptism is not simply a symbol or a hollow ritual. Rather, it is a glorious means of grace a means by which the holy Lord God comes to us and blesses us. Not only do the Holy Scriptures teach, but we firmly believe that *"Baptism works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe."* (Luther's Small Catechism) The Bible says, *“Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins.”* Acts 22:16

As water cleanses our bodies, so the water of Baptism, used with the Spirit-filled Word of God cleanses our souls. Through Holy Baptism you became God's very own children, members of His household, taking on His blessed name. Listen: *"You are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* Galatians 3:26, 27.

Picture yourself at the water or in a boat on the water or lying on a raft in the water. Maybe you're at a lake, a pond, a waterfall, or the ocean. There's something tranquil about water.

After you sit in the water a while, the neck muscles, tightened by life's tensions, relax and let go, almost making you fall asleep. It's so very peaceful!

I like to think of the waters of Holy Baptism being much the same. Lives of separation from God, lived under the world's philosophy that if we sin more then God will increase his grace to us, are now dead with Christ. How comforting that is! Because we died with Christ, we now live anew by God's gift to us of water and Word!

That is to say that by dying through the waters of Holy Baptism, we now live. And that means our lives now stand in stark contrast to what they once were!

As nice as this sounds and as good as it is, don't think that all is well and good! Satan looks at this and devises a plan to extricate us from our faith in Jesus!

He and his minions will stop at nothing until they've accomplished their mission. He even entices us with the "dangling carrot," if you please, that the more we sin the more God will shower us with his grace!

And the Roman Christians were falling for it. That's the premise of Romans chapter 6 where Paul takes up the question: "*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?*" (v 1). We don't need any lifestyle change whatsoever, they were saying, so live life as you want.

We might fall for it too. "I know marriage is supposed to be between one man and one woman, but I guess God's grace covers that, right? I don't want to be insensitive to some-one else's feelings, right? I mean, God wouldn't really send somebody to hell if he doesn't repent, would he?"

"I know sex is supposed to be just in marriage, but what we do isn't, like, horrible. We really like each other. We'll probably get married someday. God's gracious, loving. He won't really send us to hell if we don't repent, right?"

"I know God says in the Bible 'I hate divorce'"—that's Malachi 2:16, by the way— "but God would surely understand my circumstances. Surely, he'll let it slide."

Now what's wrong with this picture? Well, for one, this is Satan talking, not the Lord. Satan doesn't listen to Holy Scripture, doesn't like Holy Scripture, and won't honor the words of Holy Scripture. He disdains it and tries to get us to question its authenticity and veracity. When faced with the truth, he will try to use it against us. He will twist the Word into something unrecognizable to anyone but the "old Adam" in us! This broken logic, what the world clings to so tightly will never hold water in the face of God's Word! God's judgment on unrepentant sin, continuing in sin when we know it's against what he says in Scripture, is exactly what he says in Scripture that it is: eternal suffering in hell.

Paul says we can't even think about continuing in sin. We are dead to all of this nonsense! ***"Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 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"*** (vs 1b–4a).

Mankind is satisfied to live and function in this perverse thinking and doing. But Paul reminds the Roman congregation that this kind of perverse thinking has no power over us (v 6). Our sin has been drowned. We have been set free from all these sins, not because they don't matter, but because Jesus died for them. We are forgiven because Jesus took all these sins to the cross.

Our sexual sins, our sins of silence when we know others are sinning, our sins of commission and of omission whatever they might be are all were nailed to Jesus' cross, taken away from us. Christ died for all our sins of thought word and deed. Therefore, when we repent, turn away from those sins, we no longer bear the punishment we have earned. We are delivered from hell to heaven!

“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” (v 5).

So, then, just how does the Church, God's people, continue to live in this world? How do we live in this world but not let the world's authority and power take over our lives? How do we live now since we have “died to sin,” drowned, and been buried with Christ in Baptism?

By daily clinging to Christ remembering our Baptism each morning as we awake.

Baptism offers us this new life! ***“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”*** (v 4). This new life is quite different, because the power of God’s Word has taken over our lives. How we conduct our daily life is different. Oh, this isn’t to say we won’t ever sin again; we will and often! But Baptism says that Satan’s old perverse distortion of this Word will have no power over us ever again! The “old Adam” in each of us has been nullified! We now reflect the glory of the Father made available through a cross and empty tomb.

We now reflect this “new life” in our world just as Paul did after his Damascus road experience and we do it gladly and willingly. The old has gone. That’s the way it has to be, you know! We cannot go on living back there! We share the resurrection of Jesus!

By baptism we have become heirs and joint heirs with Christ. In baptism our names are not only inscribed in the church records and on a baptismal certificate, but in God's own Book of Life. Peter declares: ***"Baptism also now saves us."*** 1 Peter 3:21. And so brothers and sisters, and especially you Harrison you not only belong to your earthly family, but through the washing of the water and the Word you belong to the holy Lord God, the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of saints.

So, breathe your new life and live it to the fullest in Christ Jesus! Oh, and don't be bashful about telling someone you know who is mired and living in the past!

Amen