

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Romans 5:12–19**

**Sermon: Death and Life**

If you were in church this past Wednesday, you heard the echo of those words first spoken in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve:

“Remember, you are dust and to dust you shall return.” When Adam fell into sin, he not only put himself under condemnation and plunged into death; he brought all of humanity—including you—with him. That is, Adam’s destiny is death, and because your life is bound up with his, you are walking on the trail he blazed. This morning, on this First Sunday of Lent in this 500th year of the Reformation, our text is our Epistle from Romans and also the Reformation hymn by Lazarus Spengler, “All Mankind Fell in Adam’s Fall” (*LSB* 562).

Spengler and his hymn are, in fact, a story in themselves, well worth telling during this year in which we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Spengler (1479–1534), the ninth of twenty-one children, was a leader of the Reformation movement in Nuremberg and a close friend of Luther, so closely aligned with him that Spengler was named in the same bull of excommunication in 1521. Spengler was a delegate to both the diets at Worms and Augsburg. It was Spengler who sent Luther a drawing to become his seal, the famous “Luther rose,” and Luther wrote back explaining how it had “hit the mark” of his theology (AE 49:358–59).

So let’s take out our hymnals and turn to hymn 562 and read together the 1<sup>st</sup> stanza.

*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.*

Sin is never static. It has a life all its own. We see this in Genesis, as Eve is seduced into unbelief by the serpent. Adam—her husband and head—who should have been her guardian, is drawn with her to defy their Creator’s word. He, too, ate of the tree of which God had warned him that in the day you eat of it you will surely die. The curse did descend from Adam and Eve to their children. Cain’s slaughter of Abel is evidence of this downward spiral. The Scriptures clearly testify that sin came into the world through this one man, Adam, and because of his trespass, death reigned through him.

But our problem is more than morality. It is not simply that we live out our years and then perish. If it were only a matter of dying as though death was just a part of nature, just another turn in the inevitable cycle of life, then perhaps we could meet death with calm composure, albeit with regrets.

But death is not natural. God did not create human beings to die but to have life with him. Death is the result of sin, and where there is sin there is God's wrath—his righteous opposition to our rebellion. God's wrath is revealed against all unrighteousness. It is a death sentence that Adam's sin brought upon himself and the world. "The soul that sins shall die" is a curse that embraces the whole earth, for all have sinned and fall short of God's glory. Such a death is not simply the last event of our biological life; it is the shadow that casts itself over every step of the journey from cradle to grave.

Now let us read verse 2 and 3 together:

*Through all our pow'rs corruption creeps  
And us in dreadful bondage keeps;  
In guilt we draw our infant breath  
And reap its fruits of woe and death.*

*From hearts depraved, to evil prone,  
Flow thoughts and deeds of sin alone;  
God's image lost, the darkened soul  
Seeks not nor finds its heavenly goal.*

Sin is devastating. Its corruption is ever on the move, “creeps,” as our hymn puts it, enslaving Adam and all of his naturally born children in a prison from which no inmate may escape. We confess it in the liturgy “that we are by nature sinful and unclean.” Before we confessed it, God revealed it in the Holy Scriptures, as David confessed: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps 51:5). From our birth, we lack the true fear of God and neither trust God nor love him. This is more than a tendency toward sin that could be overcome with a decision of the will or the persistent practicing of some spiritual disciplines.

The heart itself is desperately evil, wicked above all things, says the prophet Jeremiah. And Jesus himself declares that the heart is a veritable cesspool out of which bubbles hatred, lies, adultery, and all other toxic symptoms of our inherited sin.

We sin in thought, word, and deed because we are sinners. That is our death-bound destiny received from Adam. God's image given in creation is shattered, and we live not only in a dark world but also with a darkness of the soul so deep that we could never find our way back to the Father's house.

Let us read verse 4 and 5"

*But Christ, the second Adam, came  
To bear our sin and woe and shame,  
To be our life, our light, our way,  
Our only hope, our only stay.*

*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.*

We are all too familiar with Adam's destiny, not only from the Scriptures but also from life in this world. "**He was born and he died**" is not only a biblical refrain; it is the truth about each of us. But the apostle Paul testifies to another destiny, not of trespass, wrath, and death but of righteousness, grace, and life.

It is the destiny of the one man, Christ Jesus. Remember how the apostle puts it in our text? ***“But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many”*** (v 15). This Jesus is the second Adam, but he is so very different from the first Adam.

The contrast between these two men could not be more pronounced. Adam stands at the head of humanity, turned against God and turned in on himself. “In Adam we have all been one,” says Martin Franzmann’s hymn (*LSB* 569). United to Adam, we share his fate, were it not for the ***“one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all”*** (1 Timothy 2:5–6).

He is the one who has purchased and won all of Adam's children, not with gold or silver, but with his own blood. Indeed, the gift is not like the trespass, for in Christ there is grace upon grace, blessing piled upon blessing!

In Christ, there is an abundance of mercy, which covers our trespasses. In Adam, there is condemnation aplenty. In Christ, there is no condemnation (Rom 8:1), for his blood cleanses us from all our sins.

Death asserted its lordship over Adam and all who are in him.

In Christ, It Is Not Death but Life That Reigns, for Jesus Is the King of Righteousness.

And let us read verse 6:

*We thank You, Christ; new life is ours,  
New light, new hope, new strength, new pow'rs.  
This grace our ev'ry way attend  
Until we reach our journey's end.*

Our hymn, like our text, ends with doxology, for in Christ new life is ours! We are no longer under the reign of sin and death, cowering under God's wrath. We have another lord, a new lord who rules over us with his forgiveness, giving us reason to rejoice with "new light, new hope, new strength, new pow'rs."

Adam's destiny was death. In Christ, we have another destiny righteousness and resurrection to life everlasting. Thanks be to God!

Amen