

Sermon Draft

Text: Romans 5:12–17

Sermon: “Sin”

“What a difference a day makes,” especially when we consider the difference between this Sunday and last Sunday. In the church year we have traveled (in one week) from the mountaintop experience of the transfiguration to another mountain, the mountain of temptation for Jesus.

What a difference the change of season in the church year brings, from the joyful songs and mission focus of Christmas and Epiphany to the focus and songs of repentance and preparation in Lent. The liturgical shift enables us to preach the “full counsel of God” and reminds us that by our worship we are able to say, “What a difference a day makes,” a day that brings us the promise of forgiveness, the fellowship of the body, the instruction of God’s Word, and so much more.

The Old Testament Reading reminds us of the difference one day in the life of Adam and Eve made for all humankind. “Then the eyes of both of them were opened,” but opened to a horrible truth, the realization of what they had just done.

Because of this day our confession and worship begins with the words
“We confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean.”

The Epistle shows how that one sin impacted “all men” and would need another great single moment in history to make things right once again between God and “all men.” The universal influence of the man Adam is thus compared to that of Christ, all the while noting that “God’s grace” through “the one man, Jesus Christ, overflowed” much more!

The Gospel contrasts Jesus’ struggle with that of Adam and Eve. They fall prey to the lies of the devil, but Jesus stands firm, showing us our vulnerability when we face the tempter on our own and our tremendous power to overcome when we face him through Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve’s disobedience stand in stark contrast to the perfect obedience of Jesus when faced by the same tempter.

Our text for this morning is from Paul’s letter to the church in Rome. Paul’s letter to the Romans was perhaps relayed by Phoebe to the Christians in Rome (16:2). The official postal service was for government letters only—those bearing the emperor’s seal.

But while ever so many government letters have been forgotten, Paul's letter has changed the world. It remains perhaps his most beautiful and powerful gift to the church.

In 5:1–11, Paul is talking about “*we [who] have been justified by faith.*” He places emphasis on faith and what follows: peace, rejoicing, and hope. The Romans can have peace in their time of persecution, joy despite fearful attacks, and hope when they are helpless. Christ is that peace, rejoicing, and hope because he died for the unrighteous, not just the “righteous.”

By his blood, we are now justified and reconciled to the King of Heaven, even though earthly emperors will rage against believers. There is a strong eschatological theme: if, while enemies of God, we were reconciled to him through Christ's death, how much more will our living Lord save us from God's anger on the Last Day.

In making calls on elderly members, one of the most difficult transitions is trying to get good, church-attending members to recognize and accept that our elderly may not be able to attend church anymore because of their declining health. One arthritic great-grandmother came to church with some coaxing. As she was being greeted after the service, she said in a whisper that everyone could hear, “I took two pain pills to get through your sermon!”

We do not like to accept that we are getting older. The mind seems to work just as quickly as when we were youngsters, but the joints and the muscles ache with every little movement. As sinners, we don't like to accept that many of the problems we see around us have been caused by us. Suffering, sickness, suicide, and stealing are problems of this life caused by original sin. The words of Paul to the Romans describe the reason for the misery of our life here, but even more strongly they direct us to the gift of God in Christ Jesus: the replacement of death with life.

“Sin entered the world . . . and death through sin.” At a funeral, we talk about death. We talk about sorrow, about loss, about an end to suffering, or even about going home to the Lord. We seldom talk about sin.

To accept who we are is a most difficult task. We try to protect our egos. All our children are above average, and all of us are almost perfect parents. Athletes strive to be the best, to be unbeatable. We set up Olympic competitions so that the best may go against the best and push each other to go higher, faster, farther. Most of us accept ourselves as non-Olympians. Do we recognize ourselves, though, as miserable sinners? Death brings that shock of recognition. *“Sin entered the world . . . and death through sin, and in this way [Note: ‘In this way,’ because of sin!] death came to all men, because all sinned.”*

Death is the only certainty for those who do not know Jesus Christ. A child has visions of being an astronaut or major league football player, but the chances of him growing up to wear a space suit or a football helmet are slim.

However, unless the Lord returns first, there is a 100% chance that we will lie in a casket. Since Adam and Eve fell into sin, life has always been followed by death. As Paul says, ***“Death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam.”*** Adam has “left his mark” on us all.

We must learn to accept that we are mortal. As soon as we are born, we start the dying process. A child starts with original sin, the sin that came from the fall of Adam. At birth we may not recognize the aging process of original sin, but it is there; and we can’t stop the aging process or alter our status as born sinners.

“How much more did God’s grace . . . overflow to the many!”

Grace: But our gracious God has not left us in our sinful condition. He has given everyone in the world a gift—a gift totally unlike and marvelously greater than the condition of sin in which everyone is born. This gift is the gift of salvation for dying sinners through the death of our Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross.

Jesus Christ is the second Adam. He also has “left his mark” on us. It is the mark of the cross, the sign that our sins are paid for, that our redemption has been purchased by him.

That redemption is a free gift—quite expensive to Jesus, but free to us! It is a gift of grace. The immediate result of that gift is justification. Justification is the reversal of the guilty verdict of condemnation, the death sentence imposed on us through Adam. Justification is acquittal, pardon, a declaration of clemency, a verdict of innocence for the sake of Christ.

Life: The gift of justification imparts to us eternal life. If we all became mortal through Adam, how much more will we live through our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus Christ (v 15). Death was king until the King of kings arrived. He reigns over all, having conquered death. Now we have the sure promise of reigning with our King forever in eternal life (v 17).

God's grace is a certainty for as who know Jesus Christ, and therefore know who we are. We can deal with the realities of life, even confess our own sinfulness, knowing that Jesus has overcome the world, even overcome our sinfulness and our death. "How much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ"!

Amen