

Sermon Draft

Text: Romans 6:1-11

Sermon: Baptism Connects

Baptism is the obvious focus of the day. Christ's Baptism is featured in the *Gospel*, in which he comes to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

In the *Old Testament Reading*, one of the Servant Songs of Isaiah, God invites us to “***Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him***” (Isaiah 42:1). The inclusion of this reading, with its reference to the Spirit being placed upon the chosen servant, is ultimately fulfilled in the Gospel lesson with the Spirit's appearance in the form of a dove at Christ's Baptism (Matthew 3:16).

The *Epistle*, our sermon text, emphasizes what God accomplishes in the baptized believer. In Baptism, God connects the baptized to the death and resurrection of Jesus. He raises the baptized to new life now and will, on the day of Christ's return, raise the bodies of all baptized believers in a resurrection “like his” (Romans 6:5).

Thus, there are past, present, and future aspects of God’s action in the life of the baptized believer articulated in this text.

To say that Baptism “connects us to Christ” is to say that prior to our Baptism, we were *disconnected* from Christ. Scripture confirms this in no uncertain terms. In fact, “disconnected” might be an understatement. In Ephesians 2, Paul describes our condition prior to Christ as being “*dead in our trespasses*” (Ephesians 2:5). He also describes us by nature as being “*children of wrath*” (Ephesians 2:3) in other words, by our very nature, as we are conceived and born, we are under the wrath of God because of our sin. To say that we were disconnected from God by our nature is definitely an understatement.

Fortunately, God is at work in Baptism to connect us to Christ. First, God connects us to Christ’s death in and through Baptism. Paul writes, “*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 3–4).

We are so closely connected with Christ's death in our Baptism, that it's as if we've traveled back nearly two thousand years and are there with Christ, in the tomb with him. Dead with him on Good Friday as the sun is going down and the preparation of his body for burial comes to a close for the day. And every time we baptize a child or an adult, God is at work figuratively joining that person, young or old, to the death of Christ.

But God does not leave us in Christ's tomb! In Baptism, just as he figuratively buries us with Christ, so he also raises us with Christ to new life. Paul writes, *"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). Notice, this *"newness of life"* is something we are walking in right now. It is not something we have to wait for our death to experience; we have it right here and now through God's action in our lives in our Baptism.

What a contrast. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. Now, God has raised us to new life in and through Baptism. This new life is a life in which we no longer live for ourselves, but for Christ, who reconciled us to God once again. It is a life in which we no longer live to gratify our sinful desires, but rather live to please our gracious God.

This is what Paul means when he writes, ***“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”*** (v 11). When you are “dead” to something, you don’t respond to it—just as a dead person doesn’t respond to anyone or anything. So also, with sin in our lives. “Consider yourselves dead to sin.”

And now we see how silly and nonsensical Paul’s question at the beginning of this chapter really is. Paul asks, ***“Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!”*** (vs 1–2).

In other words, now that we are Christians and our sins are forgiven by the grace of God, his undeserved, unmerited favor through faith in Jesus Christ, should we sin all the more so that God can exercise his grace even more? Should we sin in abundance so that God has the opportunity to forgive us even more frequently?

The question, of course, is absurd. And Paul recognizes it as such. It would be like asking, “Should I set my house on fire so that the fire department can get more practice at putting out house fires?” “Should I crash my car into a tree so that first responders get more practice in responding to accidents?” By no means, indeed!

At the same time, we know that we will not be free from sin this side of heaven. We are still going to sin, even as we walk in this newness of life. The difference is that we don't *live* to sin. Instead, we repent of our sin daily. And we live daily in the forgiveness that is ours in Christ. And daily we walk in the newness of life that God gave us in our Baptism.

And it's a new life that doesn't end when life here on this earth ends. Our connection with Christ in our Baptism has future blessings for us and for all Christians. Paul writes, ***“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). There is still more to come! Just as Christ was raised from the dead, physically, bodily, raised from the dead, so will we be raised from the dead! So will all who are connected to Christ and his resurrection through Baptism.

This is the sure and certain hope we have as the baptized children of God. Death is not the end. Death does not have the final say. Death is but a doorway, a gateway into an eternal life in the presence of God with all who have gone before us and all who will come after us.

And with those who have gone before us into the presence of the Lord, we await that day when Christ the one with whom we were buried and raised to new life in our Baptism will return.

He will not return in meekness and humility as he came to be with us the first time. He will come in all power, glory, and majesty.

On that day, our bodies will be raised, just as his body was raised. On that day, our bodies will be changed to be like his glorious body. Our bodies will be, to quote Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, ***“incorruptible, imperishable, and immortal.”*** In other words, our bodies will no longer suffer any of the effects of sin. No arthritis, no cancer, no high blood pressure, no heart attacks. And our bodies will no longer be subject to death, for death itself, the penalty for sin, will be no more.

And on that day, all of humanity will stand before Christ. On that day, the books will be opened. But not to fear. Your name is written in the Book of Life. Then, you will be eternally as you are today: connected to Christ.

Amen