

Baptismal Life

Romans 6:1-11

(this sermon is an adaptation of a sermon written by Rev. David Saar St. John's Lutheran Church in Mount Forest, Ontario, Canada)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Well, it has been building for 25 years, I guess it is time to come clean. But I must ask you to remember, that I am now coming before you as if this is the privacy of the confessional. Are you ready? Here it goes! I confess that I have blood on my hands. I'm a serial killer. There. I've said it.

Over the past 25 years I've been complicit in 127 homicides. I know all the names, and I could give you all the dates, I have them all written down someplace. I have also had numerous accomplices in these murders, but I will not naming names.

I murdered everybody the same way. I drowned them all. Sometimes others held them while I poured water on their head until they were dead. Then, after I killed them, I helped get rid of the bodies. They are all buried in the same grave.

Nobody would realize where they're buried. Forensic science will never be able to identify the bodies. The flesh is completely deteriorated. There is no way that it can come back to me. They are dead. I made sure by saying those killing words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Yes, that is correct; I am guilty of baptismal homicide. Some of those I have helped to murder and bury are here today.

Of course, some are not comfortable with such talk about murder or homicide. Maybe you were a little worried as I began, thinking, "where is this going?" Some of you are probably a bit upset that I tied baptism to murder, thinking, "that was a rude way to get our attention."

Just so we are clear on this, I did not make this comparison, God did! It is His Word in the letter to the Romans which says it. Listen to a portion of our text again: *What shall we say then? 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, 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.*

Most people believe that physical murder is horrendous. But how many people would have a similar reaction if they knew for certain the eternal well-being neighbour?

Yes, we are rightly appalled at the shootings that take place, the number of people who have been killed. But let me ask you this, how many of our neighbors are at this time headed for hell because they do not believe in Jesus Christ? Are you as appalled by the possible horrific loss of life – that they might have to endure pain and suffering for eternity?

People need to be baptized and live in their baptismal faith to have eternal life! Dear friends, know this, those who have never been put to death by water and the word will have eternal problems. Those who do not die the first death will perish eternally in the second death. In other words, those who do not die with Christ, will on the last day taste a death which will burn eternally.

This is serious stuff!

Baptism is discussed in Luther's Small Catechism, the daily devotional book for us as Lutherans. It is a part of the most basic, the rudimentary teachings of the faith which we Lutherans study and pray every week of our lives. When we look at the section on baptism, we read about what God is doing, the miracle of water and the word, and how He bestows faith. Unfortunately, when some get to the fourth part of Holy Baptism in the catechism, they think, "Finally! After all that word and water and faith stuff, we get to something practical, something **WE** can do."

It says there: "*What does such baptizing with water indicate? It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.*"

Many read this and then make it about themselves. They think, "See? Baptism means that I should kill my Old Adam and let the new man come to life. It means I need to be super hard on myself, try harder, suffer, discipline myself, use all my will power, and die to sin. Then, I will really be sanctified, I will make myself truly holy! And when I finally do this, God will be especially happy with me. Then the new me, my better self, can peek out and be pure."

Dear friends, baptism is not a suicide of your old man, it is not even assisted suicide. It is a homicide. You are not in control over your death. You are not God. It is not like you get to decide, "Ok, I will stop using God's name in vain now. I will stop lusting, OK, after I get one last look at that pair of legs over there. I will start being nicer to my parents. I will stop harming the reputations of others by my gossip. I will forgive everyone. I will treat all people like I want to be treated"

Repent! Die! Quit thinking you are all that! You are not!

What you are, is baptized! You are dead. God has killed you. Stop trying to do it yourself! God crucifies you every day you live as a son, daughter, mother, father, husband, wife, worker, citizen, or in all your other vocations. That is God doing a daily Good Friday on you, doing contrition and repentance on you. Dead men are not alive. Dead men do not raise themselves. They are dead. You are dead. God is a homicidal baptismal killer.

But dear friends, that's a good thing for you, because dead men don't sin. They are free from sin. Our text says so: *Our old self was crucified with Christ in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.*

Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, took on your sin in His body. He suffered for it, was crucified for it, died for it, and was buried for it. He died to sin once – for all. He died for your sin! He died for my sin! And your sin was buried in His tomb. You don't do it yourself. Christ has done it for you.

But we are not done yet! You see, it gets even better than that! On Easter Sunday Christ is raised from the dead. Christ will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. If death and sin do not enslave and kill Christ, then sin and death do not – and cannot enslave or kill you either. Why? Because you're baptized into Christ, that's why. Christ's death is your death – you never die again. His life is your life – He lives it within you.

This past week we celebrated Independence Day. Dear friends, I invite you to celebrate and rejoice in your greater, your eternal independence. Your declaration of independence from sin and death was signed with the blood of Jesus upon the cross. It was purchased with His innocent suffering and death. And your freedom was declared when Christ rose on the third day, leaving the tomb empty.

God gives you his word and promise on it. He says, "I drown you in Christ's bloody death. I crucify you with Christ. I bury you in this watery grave. You are done for. And then I raise you up to life again. You are free from sin. You do not live in sin! I forgive you all your sins."

If God is a homicidal serial killer, he's also a serial resurrecter. He raises you to the newness of life, with his word. And this wet word I declare to you all today. "You're alive in Christ. You're free from sin. Go in peace. Live in Christ!" Amen.