

**Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – July 16, 2017**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

*Pastor Charles Heup*

**Romans 6:1-11**

**Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2) By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3) Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4) We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.** 5) If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6) For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- 7) because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. 8) Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9) For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10) The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11) In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

We love to celebrate special occasions in our lives. We celebrate our birthdays – some seem more significant than others. We do the same with anniversaries. Young couples who are going out together might celebrate the fact that they've been going out for a whole month. Older couples might celebrate 60 years of married life together. We also are fairly good at remembering significant events such as what we were doing when we heard about the events of September 11, 2001 or for those who were around the assassination of President Kennedy in November of 1963. The most significant event that took place in our life was our baptism but unless we were baptized as an older child or an adult, we're not likely to remember it. That doesn't mean that we can't recall our baptism. After all we don't remember our births but we can certainly celebrate them. When was the last time you thought about your baptism? There is value in reminding ourselves again and again of our baptisms. In our catechism we are reminded that Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance...and that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity. Our text for today helps us to

**Theme:** Look again at your Baptism

1. See the purpose of your baptism
2. See the guarantee of your baptism

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul confronts two very opposite, but equally false teachings. On one extreme, the Judaizers taught that Christians must be obedient to Old Testament laws regarding circumcision, diet, rites of purity and elaborate rituals of sacrifice. On the other side, the libertines said that no laws applied to Christians. Theirs was the "feel good" mentality that still motivates many people today. Apparently, some went so far as to say that the more we sin the more God will be glorified in forgiving us. That's why Paul asks in our text: **Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?**

Paul answers that question by pointing us back to the purpose of our baptism. **2) By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3) Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4) We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**

Every time we think of our baptisms, we can be reminded of the death of Christ. Christ died to set us free from sin. Our baptism links us to Christ. We become partners in his life – his righteousness becomes ours. We also become partners in his death. He died the death that we deserved. We often say that Jesus died for our

sins. Here Paul carries things a bit further. Since we have been joined to Christ through baptism Paul says that we died and were buried with him. And just as Christ rose from the dead so also we have been given new life – a life in which we will no longer live in sin. Sin will no longer control us. We died to sin.

Sin no longer has absolute control over us. The present is still filled with crossroads and decisions, right turns and wrong turns, but the future is certain. Christ has won it, guaranteed it! That guarantee makes all the difference when we come to the crossroads and decisions. Christ gives us forgiveness for the past, help for the present, and eternal life for the future. Traveling in newness of life means turning to God and not to sin for our sense of direction.

Another way of describing the purpose and power of our baptism is to say that it makes us Christ-like. We were baptized that we might live a new kind of life, a life totally different from our old life in which we were doomed by sin. Because most of us were baptized as infants we may not really recall our old life – a life which was controlled by sin, a life in which we did not even care about God and his will, a life in which we knew no hope, no comfort, no forgiveness. Thank God, that he has spared us those memories and filled us the hope of eternal life, the comfort of his love and the forgiveness of all our sins! Thank God, that we are no longer controlled by sin but that we are now free to live for him.

We are dead to sin. Sin leads a person to think of the law a way to avoid God's punishments and gain his rewards. The more a sinner looks at the law the more he sees just how impossible it is for us to live the perfect life God requires. All of the religions of this world are man's attempts to come to God. Christianity tells us of God's coming to us in love and grace. And that love and grace is surely present in baptism as God calls us to faith. He gives us a new name and a new life. Through baptism we become Christians – now we belong to Christ. Now we live for him, gladly, willingly, and eagerly seeking to use the law as a guideline for life of thanksgiving. Baptism brings us to faith so that we are able to serve the Lord here on earth and hereafter in heaven.

But alas as we consider our service to the Lord – we confess that in spite of the fact that sin no longer has absolute control over us – we often fail to willingly serve the Lord. All too frequently we find ourselves following the call of sin. And that's why Luther in his Catechism chided us to make a regular use of our baptism – by daily drowning our Old Adam in contrition and repentance. Contrition is sorrow over sin. Repentance is believing that God forgives my sins for Jesus' sake. And that's just the guarantee that our baptism gives to us. When we look at our baptism we are reminded that just as Christ was raised from the dead that we too have been given a new life.

**5) If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection...**

The resurrection of Christ is our guarantee that the full price of sin has been paid for by Christ. That's the assurance we need to hear each day because our sinful old man still lifts us his ugly head in our lives. The resurrection of Christ assures us of our justification. Christ lives. Our sins are forgiven. God has declared us not guilty for Christ's sake.

It is because of what Christ has done for us that baptism works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe. (1 Peter 3:21) **Baptism ... saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...** And the Apostle Paul reminded Titus: (Titus 3:5-7) **[God] saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6) whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7) so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.**

Through baptism we have become children of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26) We need that daily reminder because there is much about our lives and much in our lives that hides that fact. We're not always treated like God's children and we don't always live like God's children. But God's grace remains. Christ still lives. Our sins have been paid for. We are not guilty for Christ's sake. It's that declaration which is the power behind the new life which we enjoy in Christ. It's that declaration which guarantees our salvation. And that's the declaration the empowers and motivates us to set aside sin and to live with Christ and for Christ.

Over and over again, our text reminds us that those who are no longer controlled by sin will live for the Lord because they have been joined to him. **For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- 7) because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. 8) Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9) For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10) The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11) In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

I often describe the role that baptism plays in our lives with this illustration. Think of a young child who has been playing in the yard. His clothes are dirty and grass stained. And now, it's time for him to get ready to go to a party or some other place where dirty clothes would be inappropriate. So his mother or father gives him a bath and some brand new clothes -- clean clothes and tells him to stay out of the dirt because he's going to a party. The parent has provided clean clothes and a reason to keep those close clean. At least for a time the child will proudly wear his new clothes. Kids will be kids of course and won't stay clean for ever and so this scene is repeated over and over again.

By nature, you and I are dirty and sin stained. God washes us with the blood of Christ and gives new clothes. (Isaiah 1:18) **"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. (Galatians 3:27) for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** And that provides us with a reason to keep ourselves away from the dirt of sin – to proudly live for Christ. Of course, since we all have a human nature we will sooner or later find that we've gotten ourselves dirty with sin again. That's when we'll turn again to our baptism and the promises of forgiveness and new life it makes to us. We'll confess our sin and trusting in the forgiveness which Christ won for us and provided to us in baptism we'll once again **count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus** just as Paul reminds us in the last verse of our text.

Instead of remaining in sin, a Christian is determined to be “dead to sin, but alive to God” in the same way that Jesus Christ is now dead to sin and alive to God. He lives to give glory to God. The closing verse of this text points out the total separation that exists between a Christian and sin. The Christian's face is turned to God not sin. According to our new life we strive to please God and not the desires of our flesh. We desire to live a life pleasing to God. We are dead to sin.

All of this is possible only because we are in Christ Jesus. Power for living a new life of faith comes from Jesus. The knowledge of God's will comes through the revelation of that will by Christ. Through Jesus' work of redemption, the Christian finds the motivation to live as his Savior lived. Even in times of great suffering the believer is able to find comfort and strength to resist temptation. One commentator used this description to help us understand our connection to the living Christ. **The Christian in Christ is like a fish in water. We belong in Christ – in the ocean of his holiness, grace and love – not in the cesspools of sin.**

May God grant that we truly do look at our baptism as the most important event of our lives so that we will daily be reminded of the new life and purpose which we have been given through baptism and so we may be reminded that our new life is guaranteed to us by Christ's own resurrection. Amen.