

Sermon for The Third Sunday after Pentecost

Date: June 10, 2018

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Genesis 3:1-19

Epistle Reading: Romans 6:1-19

Gospel Reading: Matthew 16:24-27

Sermon Text: Romans 6:1-19

Sermon Title: What is Sin?

Psalm: 130

Hymns:

LSB 702 – My Faith Looks Up To Thee

LSB 707 – Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways

LSB 781 – We Give Thee But Thine Own

LSB 706 – Love in Christ is Strong and Living



Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184



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Text: Romans 6:1-19

¹ What should we say then? Should we continue to sin so that God's kindness will increase? ² That's unthinkable! As far as sin is concerned, we have died. So how can we still live under sin's influence?

³ Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ When we were baptized into his death, we were placed into the tomb with him. As Christ was brought back from death to life by the glorious power of the Father, so we, too, should live a new kind of life.

⁵ If we've become united with him in a death like his, certainly we will also be united with him when we come back to life as he did. ⁶ We know that the person we used to be was crucified with him to put an end to sin in our bodies. Because of this we are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ The person who has died has been freed from sin.

⁸ If we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, who was brought back to life, will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰ When he died, he died once and for all to sin's power. But now he lives, and he lives for God. ¹¹ So consider yourselves dead to sin's power but living for God in the power Christ Jesus gives you.

¹² Therefore, never let sin rule your physical body so that you obey its desires. ¹³ Never offer any part of your body to sin's power. No part of your body should ever be used to do any ungodly thing. Instead, offer yourselves to God as people who have come back from death and are now alive. Offer all the parts of your body to God. Use them to do everything that God approves of. ¹⁴ Certainly, sin shouldn't have power over you because you're not controlled by God's laws, but by God's favor.

¹⁵ Then what is the implication? Should we sin because we are not controlled by God's laws but by God's favor? That's unthinkable! ¹⁶ Don't you know that if you offer to be someone's slave, you must obey that master? Either your master is sin, or your master is obedience. Letting sin be your master leads to death. Letting obedience be your master leads to God's approval.

¹⁷ You were slaves to sin. But I thank God that you have become wholeheartedly obedient to the teachings which you were given. ¹⁸ Freed from sin, you were made slaves who do what God approves of.

¹⁹ I'm speaking in a human way because of the weakness of your corrupt nature. Clearly, you once offered all the parts of your body as slaves to sexual perversion and disobedience. This led you to live disobedient lives. Now, in the same way, offer all the parts of your body as slaves that do what God approves of. This leads you to live holy lives.

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

What is sin? Today I'd like to explore that in more depth because I think sin is often a misunderstood subject. It is highly likely that you have a good grasp on what part of sin is, but probably not the full meaning; the full definition of sin.

In several places throughout Scripture it states that we are conceived sinful, born sinful.¹ How can that be? How can we sin even before we are born? You will often hear the statement, "God doesn't make mistakes." That is often used in the context of children, even children born with physical ailments or miladies. It is said, "That's God's plan."

Now it is true that many of those special need children often do bring a very special kind of blessing to their families, in spite of the problem and troubles they suffer, but this is very important to understand, that is not part of God's plan. God's plan is that we are born perfect, and remain perfect. That is God's plan. Birth defects, mental deficiencies, physical handicaps, and the like, are not part of God's plan.

That stuff is what sin does. Sin causes the problems, the troubles, the pain. That is sin's plan. Sin is pain. Sin is trouble, problems, and imperfection. Sin is death.

When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree they died. They died that very day, that very moment. You are made in the image and likeness of God.² As such, like God, there will never be a time in the future when you are not. You have no end. You are an eternal being. Yet when God said, "The day you eat of it you will surely die³" He wasn't kidding. What did He mean? To answer that question you have to look at the Bible. What is the first question God asks Adam after they had eaten from the tree?

Now before we answer that questions let's understand something. Does God ask us questions because He needs us to tell Him the answer? Does God ask us questions because He does not know? Of course not. God asks us questions because we need the answer. God ask us questions because we need to learn. What is the first question God asks Adam after they had eaten from the tree? The first thing God says is, "Where are you?"⁴

They were eternally dead. They were eternally cut off. They were condemned to Hell eternally, and eternal separation from God. All of creation, in that moment, was cursed, soiled, and corrupted. That corruption is every misfire and mistake in everything from DNA division failure in meiosis and mitosis, to serial killers, to super novas, and galactic collisions. All of creation is corrupted and falling apart. I want you to take a moment and take that in. All of the

1 Psalm 51:5

2 Genesis 1:27

3 Genesis 2:17

4 Genesis 3:9

mess, throughout the entire Universe, is the result of Adam and Eve eating something God told them not to eat.⁵

How can that be? Because God created all of this for us. It was ours to care for, and ours to explore and enjoy. When the Bible talks about Adam and Eve eating that fruit, they were not tricked. They were not not deceived. They were not ambushed. They were convinced. Satan convinced them that sin was the better way. Satan convinced them that God's plan was not the best plan. He convinced them,... and from that moment they, and we, live in the results.

We live in it every day. It is this sinful, sin-filled, world in which we bath in the staining tar of sin and sin's affect, that drags us down. Sin is a powerful force. It got Adam and Eve and they were perfect. They were taught by God Himself, and unable to forget all that He taught them, because they remembered everything perfectly. They were perfect, and sin got them. What makes you think it won't get you?

That is how lost you are to God. You are cut off from God. You are despised by God, because we despised Him by not trusting Him, not relying on Him, not believing in Him. You are dead to God.

Now if I said 'amen' right there I would leave you with nothing but the horror of Hell ever approaching closer, with no of escape. If that was all there was to tell, you would, or at least should, live every day in a nightmare of horror...⁶ but that is not all there is to tell.

That is not all there is, because if you read those fateful verses of Scripture, while God is proclaiming punishment and curses on Adam, Eve, and Satan, He pulls a God-Thing. He give a promise. A promise of One who would crush Satan's head, and restore our relationship with God.

Adam and Eve were so certain of God's promise that, in fact, when Adam and Eve had their first child they thought he was that promised man.⁷ His name in English means, "Received." In Hebrew his name is pronounced, 'Cain.' Cain, the first murderer, was not the Promised One. Neither was Able, Seth, or any of the other sons of Adam and Eve.⁸ That Promised One would not come for a very long time. ...but He did come. The Promised One, the One who would fix the mess that we made, did come. Messiah has come and His name is Jesus.

5 Romans 8:22

6 1 Corinthians 15:14-19

7 Genesis 4:1

8 Genesis 5:4

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to crush Satan's head, as promised⁹ and to restore our relationship with our Heavenly Father. He came to make all things new.¹⁰ There is a phrase used to describe Jesus that often causes some confusion. He is called, "The first born from the dead."¹¹

That phrase, in fact, is sometimes used to prove the Bible has mistakes. Some would say, 'Jesus is not the first person in the Bible to be brought back from the dead. Other people were raised from the dead too, so the Bible clearly has mistakes.' Well, it is true that other people were raised from the dead. There are many of those events throughout Scripture. In fact Jesus raised people from the dead.

So why is Jesus called, "the first born from the dead?" Because the Bible is not talking about physical death it is talking about eternal death. What does the Bible say?

"God made Him **to be sin** who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."¹²

That Promised One, Jesus, had to step down from His regal throne. He had to stoop down to swim in the filth, failure, and foulness of this world. He had to become sin. He had to become everything that God our Heavenly Father hates most. You hear the tortured pain as He screams out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"^{13,14} It is there, in that moment, that Jesus is sin. He did more than just take our sins on His shoulders. He became sin, and the Father unleashed vengeance upon Him the likes of which, I pray to God you will never know.

That is how extreme Jesus' sacrifice was. He, King of the Universe, and the Author of Life, came into this messed up world. More than that He became sin. He did that so He could die to sin, and we could die with Him in our Baptism, and die to sin as well, and therefore live with Him.¹⁵ Jesus is called "the first born from the dead" because the Bible is talking about eternal death, which Jesus died for us. He then came back to eternal life, "by the glorious power of the Father"¹⁶ and in doing so brought us with Him. The full magnitude of all that happened on that fateful Friday we call 'Good' we will not, could not, be fully comprehend this side of Heaven's gate. It is simply far beyond anything our minds can grasp.

So let's get back to sin. Let's pick up some of the more "in your face" sins of our time. Sins like abortion, gay marriage, and now gender identity. They state, "if I was born this way

9 Genesis 3:15

10 Revelation 21:5

11 Colossians 1:18

12 2 Corinthians 5:21

13 Matthew 27:46

14 **One additional note:** Even here Jesus is teaching. He is quoting Psalm 22 which ends with "He has finished it" Jesus said, "It is finished." Even on the cross His thoughts are for us, not for Himself.

15 Romans 6:3-5

16 Romans 6:4

it is God's plan." These are not God's plan. God has a plan. He gave us that plan.¹⁷ Those things are sin's plan. They are death. They are sin. It is being sinful. It is being full of sin, just like everyone else. Not one of us is immune. Are they unforgivable sins? Only if they are purposefully unrepentant sins. If God could forgive Adam and Eve for bringing ruination to the Universe, is there any sin too great for God to forgive? No! The Bible says:

Everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. God loved the world this way: He gave His only Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not die [*eternally*] but will have eternal life. God sent His Son into the world, **not to condemn the world**, but to save the world.¹⁸

Though we are tempted by any, and all sorts, of sin we strive to defy sin. God's Word teaches:

You must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient, from the heart, to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

And then Paul writes:

I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more

17 Genesis 1:27

18 John 3:15-17

lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.¹⁹ [*Leading to holiness.*]

God, through Jesus' work and forgiveness, makes you sanctified; makes you holy.

Sin is sin. God defines sin. We obey God. Does that mean life will be difficult, challenging, and maybe even painful physically and emotionally? Yes! Because we are sinful, full of sin. That is what this separation from God is like. What you experience here is a small taste of Hell. A small taste in a place, where God limits Satan's hand, so that all are not swept away with Satan.²⁰ You can't imagine what it's really like to be fully cut off from God. So great is His forgiveness and grace which abounds all the more as sin grows all the more. Now does that mean that we:

are to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!
How can we who died to sin still live in it?

The Bible says:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized **into His death?** We were buried 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.²¹

We are not born perfect and then become sinful. We are born guilty, we are conceived sinful, and guilty.²² God does not make mistakes, sin causes mistakes. Those mistakes are in all of us. They are just more visible on some people. It is still sin, and it is still that thing against which we must battle in this life.

Sin always is lying outside your door ready to attack. It wants to control you, but you must master it.²³

That is why the Bible teaches:

This is not a wrestling match against a human opponent. We are wrestling with rulers, authorities, the powers who govern this world of darkness, and spiritual forces that control evil in the spiritual world. For this reason, take up all the armor that God supplies. Then you will be able to take a stand during these evil

19 Romans 6:11-19

20 Matthew 24:22

21 Romans 6:1-4

22 Psalm 51:5

23 Genesis 4:7

days. Once you have overcome all obstacles, you will be able to stand your ground.

So then, take your stand! Fasten truth around your waist like a belt. Put on God's approval as your breastplate. Put on your shoes so that you are ready to spread the Good News that gives peace. In addition to all these, take the Christian faith as your shield. With it you can put out all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Also take salvation as your helmet and God's Word as the sword that the Spirit supplies.²⁴

...or to put it as Jesus said,

If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? What shall a man give in return for his soul? The Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay each person according to what he has done.²⁵

We submit to God. Through Word²⁶ and Sacrament²⁷ we are fed and saved by God, who sustains us on this journey in this foreign land. We are saved by Word and Sacrament.

The Bible says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.²⁸

We are saved by the Word made flesh, Jesus the Holy Christ of God.

The Bible says:

Baptism now saves you. Baptism doesn't save by removing dirt from the body. Rather, baptism is a request to God for a clear

24 Ephesians 6:12-17

25 Matthew 16:24-27

26 John 1:1

27 1 Peter 3:21 & John 6:53-54

28 John 1:1

conscience. It saves you through Jesus Christ, who came back from death to life.²⁹

We are saved by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism done as Christ commanded.³⁰

The Bible says:

Jesus told them, “I can guarantee this truth: If you don’t eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you don’t have the source of life in you. Those who eat My flesh and drink My blood have eternal life, and I will bring them back to life on the last day.”³¹

We are saved by the Sacrament of Holy Communion done as Christ commanded.³²

The letters and words, the water, the bread and wine, are the earthly vessels God uses to bring the Heavenly treasures of Christ to us. They convey upon us salvation and eternal life, free of sin and sin’s affect. So powerful and important are these things to the life of every believer. Those who deny themselves such things deny themselves the wonders they offer.³³

We need to understand sin the way God does. We need to see sin the way God does. It is the enemy. It affects us all. God’s gifts also affect us and help us to overcome the enemy.

We are perfect “now/not yet” in Christ alone. “Now/Not yet.” It’s that Latin phrase I want you to learn. *Simul iustus et peccator*. (Simultaneously just [*or perfect*] and corrupt.) Perfect here, though living in sin, because Jesus declares us so standing in our place before His Father.³⁴ Perfect there, living without sin, as we stand before His Father.³⁵

Pick you favorite sin to hate, whatever sin you hate the most, be it lying, betrayal, abuse, or any other sin you can think of. It is not the issue. Sin is the issue. Sin is the problem. Sin is that things we must avoid, even when it seem or feels right. We don’t define sin, God does.

Then also remember what God tell us to do with sinful people? Love them like Jesus did. Do not condone the sin. Declare sin as sin. Then help the sinner not to sin.³⁶ That’s what the

29 1 Peter 3:21

30 Matthew 28:19

31 John 6:53-54

32 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

33 Paraphrased from “The Way of Salvation in the Lutheran Church,” G.H. Gerberding, Chapter 15

34 1 Timothy 2:5

35 Revelation 7:9-17

36 Matthew 18:15

Church should be about every day. If they reject that, they have not rejected you. They have rejected God and the eternal life without sin that God offers.

Sin is not just the bad stuff we do. Sin is what we are, and what we live in. May we all be saved from such things.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.