

February 26, 2023
The First Sunday in Lent
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Romans 5:12-19 (Genesis 3:1-21; Matthew 4:1-11)

DEAD IN ADAM BUT ALIVE IN CHRIST

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

Our text for meditation today comes from the St Paul's epistle letter to the Romans, the 5th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

This past Wednesday many of you gathered here for our Ash Wednesday service as the Church began its penitential season of Lent. Lent is a forty-day journey of grief and sorrow over our sin so that we return to the Lord our God and trust in Christ Jesus our Savior. The color of our paraments and banners have been changed to purple, a color of both royalty and repentance. In the ancient world purple was an expensive color worn by only by the rich and royalty. Yet when our Lord and King Christ Jesus was delivered over to be crucified for your sins and mine, the soldiers mockingly clothed Him in a purple robe. (cf: Mark 15:15–17) Therefore, purple is used during this penitential season as a vivid reminder of the contempt and scorn that Jesus endured and the sacrifice He made for our eternal salvation.

On Ash Wednesday many Christians around the world received the sign of the cross traced upon their foreheads in ashes while hearing those words God spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden: *“Remember, you are dust and to dust you shall return.”* (cf: Genesis 3:19) The ashes do not bestow any extra grace. They are simply the mark of Adam, an external reminder to you that because you are a descendant of Adam, you are a poor miserable sinner who must die and return to dust.

In the Garden of Eden, the devil planted a tiny seed of doubt in Eve's mind, saying:

“Did God actually say...” (Genesis 3:1)

... prompting the woman to doubt God's Word. Once the devil's trap of deceit was set, he quickly made an outright denial and rejection of God's Word, implying that God did not want her to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree because He knew that by doing so, she would become like Him. (cf: Genesis 3:1–7)

Adam and Eve had God's command not to eat the fruit lest they die. While the woman was deceived and sinned, Adam ignored his role as head of the household. He should have stepped in and protected his wife. St Paul writes that he was not deceived. (cf: 1 Timothy 2:13–14) He willfully ignored God's command and took the fruit from his wife and ate. Thus, sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin.

The fall of Adam brings guilt, punishment, and death to all mankind. We call it the doctrine of **Original Sin**. **Original Sin** is not the sin that you have **committed** – but Adam’s sin which God **imputes** to all mankind. **Impute** is a fancy word that means “**charged to your account.**” All of Adam’s guilt and all of his corrupt nature is transmitted to all his descendants including you and me. (cf: Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, 538) You and I have inherited Adam’s sin and eternal condemnation. At first, to inherit sin and eternal condemnation seems completely unfair and unacceptable. You are probably thinking: “*Why should I be guilty for what someone else did? Adam’s sin was outside my control. I didn’t ask to be born this way.*”

The doctrine of **Original Sin** is not a clever way for the writers of Holy Scripture to pin the blame for our sinfulness on Adam and Eve. It is a teaching that reminds us of the utter weakness and impotence into which we are born. The evidence of **Original Sin** and contempt for God rears its ugly head in your **Actual Sins** – **actual sins** being your every act of rebellion against God and His Commandments in thoughts, desires, words, and deeds. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the writers of Scripture give witness to these biblical teachings. King David writes:

“5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalm 51:5)

Jesus told Nicodemus:

“6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh...” (John 3:6)

And in our epistle text St Paul drives home the point, writing:

“... just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12)

Like Adam and Eve, you and I also have God’s Word – but we also have inherited Adam’s **guilt** and his **sinful nature**. And because of our sinful nature we are lured and enticed by our own desires which gives birth to our actual sins. Regardless of **Original Sin** or **Actual Sin**, all sin bears the fruit of death.

You are not a sinner because you sin. You sin because you are a sinner. The same devil who slithered into the Garden of Eden disguised as a serpent with deceit and temptation dripping from his tongue, slithers into your everyday life with the very same deceptions and lies, luring you into sin. Cartoons and movies portray the devil as someone who is frightening and scary. But devil does not come to you as a talking serpent or a scary red man with horns and a pointy tail. No. He comes to you all dressed up and glamorous, disguised as your deepest desire, seducing you with what you crave the most. Most likely the temptations that plagued you in your youth still entice you today and will continue to bewitch you until death has its way with you.

Some think that since they are baptized, they are free from the trials and temptations of the devil. But that’s not the case. Before your baptism, you were a child of the world and a child of the devil. Then in Baptism, you were marked with the sign of the cross. Not marked with the ashes and dust of death but marked as one redeemed to new life by Christ the crucified, baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And while your baptismal mark is invisible to the human eye, it is a visible mark to the devil. It is a mark that causes him and his demons to rage. The Holy Spirit given at baptism does not make you temptation-proof and it does not make your life on earth any easier. The devil is the enemy of God and after baptism, he is your enemy too because you were untied to Christ in Baptism. (cf: Romans 6:3-5)

I know my sins. Only you and God in heaven knows yours. Examine yourself for what you and done and have left undone according to the Ten Commandments so that the Holy Spirit can drive you to contrition and repentance. Remember, you are dust and to dust you shall return.

Our Gospel text this morning we see the contrast between Jesus' temptation by the devil with that of Adam and Eve. (cf: Matthew 4:1-11) They fall victim to the lies of the devil. But when the devil tempts Jesus to seek His own glory, rather than transgressing, He remains obedient to His calling to be the Savior of the world. He refuses to walk the devil's path so that He could walk the way of the cross. He lived the perfect life that you and I could not and suffered God's entire wrath against sin so that you and I would not. It is the righteous dying for the unrighteous. And that is what St Paul is teaching us in our epistle lesson.

Earlier I said that God has *imputed* Adam's sin and guilt to all mankind. He has charged all of Adam's sin and guilt to your account. And while at first, inheriting sin and eternal condemnation seems completely unfair and unacceptable, we also have to remember that the same God who *imputes* to you the sin of Adam and condemns you on its account, is the same God who for the sake of Jesus suffering and death, also has *imputed* to you the righteousness of Christ and declares you not guilty of your sin. St Paul says:

"For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many." (Romans 5:15)

"¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)

The one man, Adam, and the tree in the garden points forward to another man, Christ Jesus, and another tree, the cross of Calvary. In Adam and his transgression at the tree in the Garden brought death and condemnation, but in Christ and the tree on Calvary where He triumphed over sin, death, and the devil. He brings the free gift of grace and justification. (cf: Romans 5:17-19) In the trespass of Adam, you were declared guilty and deserved death, but our gracious God would not leave you in your sinful condition. In the obedience of Christ, the abundance of the grace of God and the free gift of righteousness is available to all believe and trust in Him. By faith, the obedience of Christ is imputed to you and credited to your account.

This free gift of righteousness is the gift of salvation for dying sinners purchased and won by the death of our Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross. Christ Jesus is the second Adam. Just as the first Adam left his mark on you, Jesus, the second Adam also has left His mark on you. It is the mark of the cross, the sign that your sins are paid for, that your redemption has been purchased with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. He forgives you of all your sins and grants you eternal life and salvation.

The abundance of the grace of God and the free gift of righteousness delivers to the believer an immediate result – the gift is justification. Justification is the reversal of the guilty verdict of condemnation, the death sentence imposed on you through Adam. Justification is acquittal, pardon, a declaration of clemency, a verdict and declaration of innocence for the sake of Christ. And the gift of justification imparts to you eternal life. If all mankind became sinful and died

through Adam, how much more will we live through our crucified and risen Savior, Christ Jesus. 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.

Having received the mark of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in Baptism, you are now enabled to live as a new creation in Christ, loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind – and loving your neighbor as yourself, serving him with your tithes, offerings, works, and deeds, just as God in Christ serves you.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.