

Romans 6:1-11
6th Sunday after Pentecost
July 24th, 2011
Pastor Joel T. Sauer
Year A

Connected to Christ!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Scripture's lesson for us this morning is taken from St. Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 6, beginning at the 1st verse. Permit me to read a couples verses again.

4 We were therefore buried with [Christ] 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.

This is the Word of God!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What is it that links, connects you to Jesus Christ, to His life and His death, to what He won for you, the blessings He gives you? A piece a paper with your name on it? What is it that links you, connects you to Jesus? It's not a piece of paper, but faith. Faith, belief that God has given you.

In the lesson before us this morning, St. Paul talks about this connection. He tells you that when you were baptized, the Holy Spirit brought you to faith and linked you to Jesus. It's as though an invisible rope was tied between you and Jesus, and now you are connected to everything He did. What does this all mean for your life today? That's what we want to discuss this morning as we look at the lesson before us and see that you and I are **Connected to Christ!** Let's go to our lesson.

Last week, we heard St. Paul speaking candidly to us about sin and salvation. Because sin came into the world through one man, that one man being Adam way back in the Garden of Eden, because of Adam, all people today have a sinful nature, all sin, all deserve to be punished. But through another Man, who is also True God, Jesus, because of His death on the cross – forgiveness, eternal life, salvation are ours through faith. So St. Paul ended chapter five by saying, "**But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.**" In other words, God's grace in Christ trumps, is greater than all the sin of the world.

This is where our lesson picks up. In verse one, St. Paul writes, "**What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?**" St. Paul was a practical man. He knew that people might be tempted to say, "If God is so forgiving, then it

doesn't matter if I sin. In fact, I might as well sin all the more so that God will have more opportunities to forgive me!"

Have such thoughts ever entered your mind? "As long as I go to church on Sunday, I can go out and get drunk on Saturday night – God will forgive me!" or "It really doesn't matter what comes out of my mouth, I'm forgiven – I can swear as much as I want." We may not be as bold as that, but have we ever justified doing something we know was wrong, was a sin by saying that God will forgive us later?

Is that how we are to live? Is it true that Christians can just go and do whatever their sinful nature wants, sinning and disobeying God's will, because hey – God is gracious and will forgive us anyway? St. Paul has the answer – **"By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"**

St. Paul doesn't mince any words here – by no means are we to go on sinning like it doesn't matter. No, a Christian has died to sin, because we have been connected to Jesus and His death through the sacrament of Baptism. Christ, by His death on the cross defeated sin. It no longer has control over us. Because we are intimately, miraculously connected to the death of Jesus, the blessings of His death - forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation - become ours!

What does this mean for you and me today? Sin was defeated by Jesus' death. And since we are connected to Jesus through our baptism, our sins have been defeated. No longer can that one sin from your past haunt you day and night – you know which one that is – no, it is gone, it is forgiven. No longer are you to torture yourself over that one time you caused your parents such grief – that sin is gone, it is forgiven. No longer are we to be hounded by sin. We are dead to it. Because we have been connected with Jesus' death– eternal life is ours, we have as Paul says, **"...been freed from sin."**

But there is more – not only have you been connected to Jesus' death and have been freed from sin, but St. Paul continues, **"Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him."** We not only are connected with Christ in His death, but also His resurrection.

Look at what St. Paul says in verses 4 & 5, **"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. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."**

Did Christ stay dead in the grave? Not at all! He rose from the dead. He lives and reigns forevermore! As He lives, so also do we. We needed a new life; God gave us Christ's life through Baptism. We needed to be renewed; God renewed us by making Christ's resurrected life ours through Baptism. We have been given a new life – a life that is not controlled by sin, but a life that seeks to walk with God.

Note that well. Because we are connected with Jesus' resurrection, we have been given a new life which wants to shun and say no to sin, a new life which seeks to live for God, a new life which wants to follow His will, a new life which wants to give our all to Him and His work on earth, a new life which looks to live like the people we now are by faith – children of God.

So what does this mean for you? It means that you can live for God, can follow His commandments – because you are connected to Jesus by faith. Find it hard to love that

one person who gives you a rough time? Remember that you are connected to Jesus by faith and have been given a new life which is able to love as Christ loved you. Wondering if you can say no to a pet sin, or to that one temptation? Remember that you are connected to Jesus by faith and have been given a new life which is able to say no to sin.

But when we look at our lives, there are times when we don't see this, right? I can look at my life and I see myself sinning every day. I don't always live my life the way God wants me to. What are we to do? Ah, remember your baptism, dear Christian! Don't look at yourself, but focus on the One who has given you a new life, who has forgiven your sins, who has connected Himself to you!

Martin Luther put this all beautifully when wrote about our baptism and what it means for our daily lives. **“What does baptizing with water mean? Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”**

Brothers and sisters, because you are connected to Jesus' death on the cross through faith given you at your Baptism, your sins are forgiven. They are gone, drowned, never to rise again. Don't ever forget that. Because you are connected to Jesus' resurrection in Baptism, you have been made free to serve God, to live for Him, to follow His commands and say no to sin. Take to heart what Paul says in the final verse of our lesson – **“count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus”**. Remember who you are – children of God, dead to sin, alive in Christ Jesus. Remember your baptism and that you are connected to Jesus.

In His name!

Amen.