

Saved By Grace Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Tim Bartels

Trinity 11, 2014
Romans 6:1-11¹

Part I

When a parent picks a name for a child, it is a significant job. The name the parent gives, the child has for life. So parents want to give their child a name that will serve them well. They talk about different possibilities; weigh the possibilities; and, finally, settle on a name.

One thing that can help parents pick names is a book of names. Such books give hundreds of names for both boys and girls. Not only do they give lists of names, they also give information. They will tell you the history of the name; what language it came from; what the name means in English.

Speaking of names, the first name given to anyone is the name, Adam. His name is widely known. We hear it. We use it. We are familiar with it. We are, but where does the name come from; and what does it mean? The name “Adam” is a Hebrew word. In Hebrew the word means “man.”

That is an appropriate name for Adam. He is, after all, the *first* man; and, being the first man, he is father us all. The thing is, our father Adam fell into sin. He did when he ate the forbidden fruit. When he did, all mankind fell with him. That is, ruined with sin, Adam could only father children in *his* likeness.

Our text speaks of this when it speaks of our “old man.” Our old man is also called our “old Adam.” Our old Adam means, then, that we are born in Adam's likeness; that we are “chips off the old block;” that we are “cut from the same cloth” as Adam.

So...what exactly is our old Adam? Our catechism defines it as “our inherited sinful nature with its evil lusts.”² That means the nature we

have inherited from Adam is *totally* corrupted. Corrupted it only wants to do evil and does not want to do good.³

We see the old Adam at work in today's text. Today's text follows on the heels of last weeks. Last week we heard that while Adam's sin brought death to all, Jesus' righteousness brings life for all; that God's grace is *greater than* Adam's sin. When the old Adam hears this, he is an opportunist. He logically concludes, "If God's grace is greater than sin, then why not go on sinning that grace will increase even more?"⁴

Part II

This kind of logic, you could say, is like *snub-nosing* God. Someone who snub-noses coldly rejects another. He does by ignoring them. It's like what happened in Jesus' parable, today. The first son *initially* snub-nosed his father.⁵ His father called him to work in the vineyard. He curtly replied. "I will not!" He ignored his father's wishes.

That's what the old Adam does when he uses grace as an excuse for sinning. The old Adam snub noses God. He does, because he does not like what God has to say about sin. "Sin is no big deal," he argues.

"Really, it isn't." In that way, the old Adam ignores God's will.

It's how it is with our old Adam. He says, "I like my sin. I don't want to give it up. Why would I want to do that? It puts a little fun in my life; and, what's wrong with a little fun, anyway? It's my life to live, after all. No one can tell me how to live it. As long as I'm happy, that's what counts."

Every believer has the old Adam that thinks this way about sin; that sin is no big deal. Jacob's old Adam, for example, got the best of him. It did when he stole the birthright from his older brother, Esau. Joseph's brothers' old Adams got the best of them. They did when they sold their brother, Joseph into slavery. David's old Adam got the best of him. It did when he slept with his neighbor's wife, Bathsheba.

The point is, the old Adam *is* a part of us. He is always working on us. He wants us to think that sin is *no big deal*; to plunge into it. After all, God's forgiveness is greater than your sin, he argues.

That's one way our old Adam works. He snub-noses God. There is another way the old Adam works as well. This other way, you could say, the old Adam *brown-noses* God. A brown-noser flatters another. He does with the intention of getting something. It's like what the second son in Jesus parable did. His father called him to go and work in the vineyard. He promptly replied, "I will!" He said what the father wanted to hear to get his approval....but he didn't do it.

That's what our old Adam does when we feel the effect of sin. When we feel the damaging effects of sin, our old Adam thinks it is up to us to work our way back into God's good graces. "I have to be good enough for God to win his approval," he believes.

Again, that's what our old Adam argues. "In my heart of hearts, I'm a good person. I know I'm not perfect, but I try my best. At least I'm don't live my life in the gutter like others I know. I'm not a drug addict or alcoholic; I'm not immoral or a pervert." And, if our old Adam *has* fallen into the gutter, he thinks he can reform himself. "I have to get a grip on myself. I have to change my sinful heart by resolving to clean up my act. Then I will be less of a sinner."

Every believer has the old Adam who thinks he is *less* of a sinner. Peter, for example, thought he was less of a sinner. He claimed that even though all the other disciples would fall away, he never would. The disciples thought they were too good to wash one another's feet. None of them took up the task. They left it for Jesus. Martha thought she was better than Mary. She served Jesus while Mary sat at Jesus' feet.

Again, the point is, we have this side of the old Adam in us too. When we feel that sin is a big deal, he tries to get us to believe that at least we are *less* of a sinner than others. In that way, our old Adam looks for a pat on the back from God.

Part III

All of this is our old Adam. The thing is, our old Adam just doesn't get it. Corrupt with sin, our old Adam is headed for one place; and only place only. Our old Adam puts us six feet under; and sends us to hell. He does

whether he thinks sin is no big deal or whether he thinks we are less of a sinner. Either way, he cannot help us one bit.

So, how are we going to deal with our old Adam? We can't reform him. We can't tame him. We can't change him. The only way, the Small Catechism says, is to drown him. That's what happened in your baptism. "We were buried with him through baptism into death, that Jesus as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life."

That happened for you at the baptismal font. When you look at the font, there is nothing spectacular about it. Yes, the wood is beautiful. The craftsmanship wonderful. Yet, it is just wood, metal, a shell that hold water. It is simple, plain ordinary water joined to the word. That water and the word, though, is your *link* to Jesus' death and resurrection. That is, at the font, your old Adam was crucified with Jesus. "In baptism, Jesus killed your old Adam. There he took you in his arms. There he carried you with him into his tomb. In his tomb, he buried all your sin.⁶ He buried your snub-nose sins and your brown nose sins. He did, because your sins became his sin. He paid for them in his death. He put you and your sin six feet under.

...but Jesus did not leave you in his tomb. He took you up in his arms and raised you with him. Risen in him, your sin can't touch you anymore. It can't send you down to hell. You are dead to it. You are alive in Jesus; a new creation in him. You are because Jesus rose from the dead. He did, because your sin no longer has a hold on him.

This death and resurrection, begun in your baptism, has a *daily* meaning. It does, because the old Adam sticks to us until the day we die. It is why the catechism explains the meaning of baptism this way, "baptism means that the old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts and that a new man daily come forth and arise."

To put it another way, God knows our old Adam can only snub-nose and brown-nose him. That is the ticket to hell. So to put our old Adam in its

place God sends affliction our way. He did to our first father, Adam. After Adam fell, God gave him thorns and thistles in his work; made him work under the sweat of the brow; and claimed his life by death.⁷ You and I have similar afflictions in life. We do in our work at home and at the job. In our work, we suffer frustrations, headaches, long hours, little return for our effort. In our homes, family members get sick, another suffers an accident, a family member strays, dysfunction hurts family health, death has the last word. We suffer hurt, pain, and sorrow. All of these are meant to give us a message – the world is fallen, we are mortal; we are because of sin. They are ways that God brings us to regret our sinful ways, like the first son in Jesus' parable. They are ways that God *daily* puts our old Adam to death; drops us to our knees; puts us on our backs. Helpless, the new man, created in Christ Jesus, can only plead, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!”⁸

God is. He says to you, “You are my baptized child. Baptized into my Son, I don't look at your sin. I look at my Son and see your sin buried; gone. I look at my Son and see you in him. I see you forgiven and perfect. I look at my Son and see you as an heir of heaven together with him. “Come to my Son's table, then, today. Take his body and blood on your lips. His body and blood keep you united in his death and resurrection. United with him, sin and death no longer have a hold on you. No. They don't. You are alive to me in my Son.” Amen!

¹References to the text (NKJ) will not be cited in the sermon

²*Catechism and Explanation*, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2001 edition, question 291

³*ibid*, question 97

⁴*People's Bible, Romans*, Northwestern Publishing House, p. 97

⁵Matthew 21:28-31

⁶*Triumph at the Cross*, Harold Senkbeil, Concordia Publishing House, p. 114

⁷Genesis 3:17-19

⁸Luke 17:13