

Saved By Grace Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Tim Bartels

Trinity 6, 2013
Romans 6:3-11ⁱ

Part I

We find ourselves, this morning, at the end of the 4th of July weekend. As is our custom, we have had our community parades, neighborhood picnics, and firework displays. It is all a part of our national fabric. After all, the 4th is our Independence Day.

It all has its origins in early colonial life. The British imperialists levied taxes and policies on the colonies that hindered growth. Not only that, but at the same time they did not allow them to have representation in parliament. It was a breach of their rights as English subjects.

The colonists felt the unjust burden of a tyrannical British rule. As a result, our founding fathers declared their independence from Britain. They did so in the Declaration of Independence. That declaration precipitated the Revolutionary War; and at the end of that war, the colonies got their freedom.

The freedoms we have enjoyed as a result have been great. It is fun to celebrate them. As great as they have been, there is another freedom that is far greater. It the freedom from the tyranny felt from the old Adam. The

trouble is **the old Adam wants to keep us under his control.**

Part II

Talk of this tyranny is reminiscent of Pharaoh. Pharaoh had the Israelites under his control. They were enslaved to him. He demanded that they build him store cities. He put taskmasters over them and oppressed them with forced labor. So, at the crack of the whip, at the bark of the taskmasters, the Israelites were driven like cattle.

In short, Pharaoh worked them ruthlessly and made their lives bitter. God knew it. So he sent Moses to Pharaoh. Moses spoke for God, "Let my people go!" Pharaoh refused. Time after time Moses went back to Pharaoh. Plague after plague God worked on Pharaoh. Yet, none of it reformed Pharaoh. He was determined to keep the Israelites under his control.

That's the way it is with what Paul calls our "old man." Our old man is the sinful nature that we have inherited from our first parent, Adam. For that reason it is also called our old Adam. The thing us, our old Adam, like Pharaoh, is a taskmaster that drives and shackles us. That's true because the old Adam is a *proud* sinner and does not want to concede any ground.

To put it another way, the old Adam *trusts* in his *own* ability. He thinks that by keeping the law with his hands, *he* has complied with it. It is the problem that Jesus addressed in today's Gospel reading. The Pharisees

thought they complied with the law and it *looked* like they had. To be sure, they were shining examples of their day; the best moral people you could meet; the boy scouts of the time.

It's how many think of Christianity, today. They think that Christianity is about being better moral people than others. We can do that by getting rid of the vices in our lives. We just have to try hard enough. By trying hard enough, we *reform* sinners. When we do, it is felt that we used to sin, but we don't anymore. Jesus did his part, now we do our part. In short, the old Adam wants to take *some* credit for a righteousness of its own.

...but Jesus explains in today's gospel that the keeping of the law is *more* than that. It is not only keeping the law with the hands, but is it also keeping the law with our hearts. Murder is not only the shedding of blood, but it is also holding onto grudges. Adultery is not only immoral lifestyles, but it is also entertaining lust. False witness is not only running your neighbor's reputation down, but it is also assuming the wrong motives. Greed is not only grasping for your neighbor's gifts, but it is also the basis of grumbling and complaining. Idolatry is not only false religion, but it also is taking credit for your own righteousness.

In short, the old Adam wants us to think that we can comply with the law when we can't. To be sure, we may comply with our hands, but we can't with our hearts.

Since we can't, we don't have the righteousness that we need to stand before God.

That is the condition of our old Adam. We can't reform him; can't improve him; can't make him better. He will drive us; shackle us, tyrannize us. His way of thinking will stick to us until the day that we die. That's the thing. **The old Adam is a harsh taskmaster that ends in death, eternal death.**

Part III

So...how are we going to deal with him? Well, think back to Pharaoh, for a moment. Pharaoh couldn't be reformed even though God sent Moses to him. Pharaoh only hardened his heart to God. So God forced Pharaoh's hand. He did so with the 10th plague. The 10th plague struck Pharaoh where it hurt him the most. The plague took his son's life. Finally, Pharaoh let Israel go – only to regret the decision. No sooner did Israel leave, than Pharaoh was in hot pursuit. He caught up to the Israelites at the Red Sea. Caught between the sea and Pharaoh, panic seized the people.

Yet, God intervened. He separated the waters of the Red Sea, forming two walls of water. Between the walls of water, Israel crossed on dry land. Pharaoh pursued. While in pursuit, God jammed the chariot wheels, impeding Pharaoh. Then he let the walls of water collapse on Pharaoh and his army. Pharaoh was

drowned in a watery grave. On the other side of the Red Sea, Israel was free from Pharaoh.

That's the only way to deal with the old Adam. The only way is by drastic action. It requires a death and a burial...and that's where your baptism comes in. No less than five times our text says that baptism "unites us with Jesus." By uniting you with Jesus, baptism makes you a participant in Jesus' death and burial, as well as his resurrection. "We were buried *with him* through baptism into death." Then it adds, "That just as Christ was raised from the dead, even so *we also* should walk in the newness of life."

So, when Jesus died in your place, you died with him. You did, because Jesus left your sin in the grave; paid for in full; gone from you for good. What's more, when Jesus rose from the dead, you rose with him. In that new life you are clothed not with the failed righteousness of your old Adam, but with Jesus' perfect righteousness. His righteousness is the only righteousness that can stand you before God.

It all goes to say, that in Jesus you are "no longer a slave to sin;" no longer a slave to the old Adam. You aren't because sin can no longer accuse you; it can no longer send you to hell. Sin can't because Jesus suffered hell *as if* you had suffered it. Jesus lived righteous life *as if* you had lived it. That's what your trip to the baptismal font did for you. It made you a participant in Jesus'

burial and resurrection. You, in turn, are set free from the old Adam. **The old Adam has lost his hold on you.**

Part IV

That doesn't mean you and I won't have our struggles in this life. The Israelites did. When they were freed from Pharaoh, they had a new life, a life apart from tyranny. But that new life was fraught with trouble. It was because the Israelites found themselves in the wilderness on the other side of the Red Sea. In it they suffered trial after trial. They got weary and worn. Weary and worn they were tempted to abandon God and rush into sin.

Finding themselves in such situations, at times they wished to return to Egypt. They longed for the life they had back there. They thought life was better back there...but to return to Egypt would not have been in their best interest. It would have only put them back under the tyranny of another Pharaoh. Yet, that is what the old Adam in them often longed for.

All of this is a way of saying that we still have the old Adam with us. We will, as mentioned earlier, until the day we die. That old Adam is still kicking and trashing. It wants to regain control in our lives. It wants us to return to sin. It longs for the vice sins, the heart sins, the proud sins. Like a junkie, it wants us to feed its addiction. Since it does, our old Adam has to be dealt with daily.

That's why the Small Catechism says what it does about the meaning of baptism. "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." That's another way of saying that baptismal life is one of confession and absolution. It is the drowning of the old Adam and the rising of the new man to life.

It is any wonder, then, that we begin church with a baptismal reminder? We begin with the words spoken on you at the baptismal font; "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

No sooner do we begin with this baptismal reminder than we proceed to the confession of sins. Upon that confession, you hear God's absolution. "In the stead of Christ, I forgive you all your sins." Each time you hear that, God raises you to new life in Christ Jesus. It's the same thing God does for you, as well, each time you hear the preaching of the gospel. In the preaching of the gospel and in the words of absolution the gifts of your baptism are being renewed over and over again.

...and one day God will bring to completion this new life begun in you. He will because "death no longer has dominion over you." That point is made, at what might seem like an unlikely place, at our funeral services. The remains of the deceased are put up here by the altar. Next to them is placed the baptismal font. Then service begins with words from our text. Since by baptism, "we

have been united in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection.”

That’s to say because Jesus shattered the grave’s seal and rose from the dead, the dead in Christ will rise, too. They will on the Last Day when he will call them forth from the grave. On that day Jesus will give to you your body back, sinless and ageless. **Then the old Adam will be gone from you for good.**

Part V

All of this is true because God made you a participant in Jesus’ death and resurrection. He did it at the baptismal font. Here in these waters he buried you in a watery grave and raised you to new life. No longer are you under the tyranny of the old Adam. That’s freedom to contemplate this 4th of July weekend. **Baptism frees you from sins’ tyranny! Amen!**

ⁱ Citations of the text (NKJV) will not be cited in the sermon