

Baptism of Our Lord 1/9/22
 Romans 6:1-11 C
 "Walk in Newness of Life"

"WE WERE BURIED THEREFORE 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"

Before he became a Christian, St. Augustine did not live a holy, God-pleasing life. After he became a Christian and renounced his former way of life, he happened to be walking down the street one day when he met one of his former mistresses. Seeing him, she cried, "Augustine! Augustine!" Embarrassed and ashamed, he hung his head and turned and walked in the opposite direction. Undaunted, she followed and cried out again, "Augustine! Augustine, it is I." Finally, Augustine could ignore her no longer and turned and said to her, "But it is not 'I'!"

St. Augustine stands for us as an example of what it means to be raised from the death of sin to walk in newness of life. In the new birth of your baptism, God has raised you from the death of sin to walk in the newness of life, just as St. Augustine did.

Today is the Baptism of our Lord. At the age of 30, Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River. Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of His public ministry. But honestly, I think we Lutherans struggle with the "why", why was Jesus baptized? We know from our *Small Catechism* that Baptism forgives sin, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation (cf. Question 248). But, Jesus had no sin, He had authority over death and the devil, and He had eternal salvation by His very nature. Why then would He be baptized?

The words of our hymn today help us understand why Jesus was

baptized:

Within the Jordan's sacred flood
 The heav'nly Lamb in meekness stood
 That He, of whom no sin was known,
 Might cleanse his people from their own (*LSB* 399:3).

Jesus was not baptized for Himself; He was baptized for you.

Substitution is the heart of the Gospel. God demands the life-blood of the sinner. But, because God is love, He takes the life-blood of the substitute in the sinner's place.

In our Communion liturgy, we sing those blessed words of John the Baptist, "Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world." Jesus is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29).

At His baptism, Jesus takes the place of every sinner. Jesus was not baptized to have His sins forgiven; He was baptized so that the sin of the entire world would be washed upon Him. The Bible teaches us this: "For our sake [God] made Him [that is, Jesus, His Son] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Co 5:21). In order to be that Lamb that would take away the sin of all the world, Jesus had to have all the world's sin placed upon Him. That is what happened at His baptism.

Take a look at that water. It is polluted, filthy dirty. It is filled with idolatry, disrespect, murder, anger, hate, lust, gossip, innuendo, jealousy, and coveting – all of your sins of thought, word, and deed and the sins of all the world.

By stepping into the Jordan and having that polluted, filthy water poured over Him, Jesus was taking your sin, and my sin, and the sin of the entire world upon Himself. In the Jordan waters, Jesus takes the place of every sinner. And He carries all that sin as His very own to the cross of

Calvary where He dies as the wages of them all, so that we are forgiven.

Baptism is God's means of substitution -- the Righteous Lamb for the unrighteous sinners.

As today we remember Jesus' Baptism, we also remember our own baptism and what it means to be baptized.

By the cross and His Easter resurrection, Jesus has indeed won full forgiveness and salvation for all the world. He makes that forgiveness and life your very own in Baptism. In that "washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit," God works faith in you and creates in your new spiritual life with to power to overcome sin (Titus 3:5).

Paul says it this way in our Epistle:

We were buried therefore 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. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin...So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Ro 6:4-6, 11).

By virtue of your baptism, you are now a new creation in Christ and you walk in newness of life. God gave the light of the guiding star to the wise men to lead them to Christ. Now, walking in the newness of the life we have in Christ, God shines His Epiphany light through you, so that He may lead your neighbor to Christ through you.

So, how are you doing with that? Martin Luther once commented that even though we died to sin and all unholy lusts and desires in the water of our baptism, the Old Adam within us still swims so very well! We've died to sin in Baptism, or at least we're supposed to have died to sin, but ... what

do your thoughts, words, and deeds say about you?

Is your idolatry on display for all to see? Do you put your time, your talents, your money, your hobbies, your career ahead of God, and His name, and His day? Do you disrespect all forms of authorities: your mother and father, your religious leaders, your government? Are your hands and mind and heart stained with hatred and anger and murder? Have you committed lust, adultery, fornication? Have you used your tongue to gossip, and lie, and spread innuendos? Have you looked at what your neighbor has and said, "I must have it." Its hard to die to sin, isn't it?

Daily, our sin is ever before us, and we are reminded that the Christian life is the life of repentance, and repentance is nothing more than a daily return to the waters of our Baptism. In our Large Catechism, Luther writes,

A truly Christian life is nothing other than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. For this must be done without ceasing, that we always keep purging away whatever belongs to the old Adam. Then what belongs to the new man may come forth.¹

We are baptized into Christ. We have died to sin and been raised to new life in Christ to walk in new newness of life. That is not easy. Every day, we fail. But, every new day is a new day in Christ. So, every day, we return to the waters of our Baptism to drown our sinful flesh with all of its unholy lusts and desires, that we may rise to walk in the newness of life that is ours in Christ. God feeds you with His grace as you hear His Word and as you eat Christ's own body and blood. In this way, God makes and keeps you faithful in your calling to be His child, so that you may walk in newness of life.

When the famous military leader General Gordon tried to hire a Muslim as his servant, the man refused and gave as his reason, "You will

make me a Christian”. Gordon promised that he would never speak a single word to him about his faith. And still the man refused, saying, “By my daily association with you I would become a Christian without a word from you. Your conduct speaks plainer than words, and I wish to avoid it. I will not be a Christian.”

That’s what it means to walk in the newness of life in Christ, shining His Epiphany light.

¹McCain, Paul Timothy et al., eds. *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions; A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*. St. Louis: Concordia, 2005, 456.