

IN NOMINE JESU

THE FORGIVEN LIVE UNDER FORGIVENESS

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

The theme for this nineteenth Sunday after Trinity developed from the Word of God in our pericopes (cuttings from Scripture) is:

Repentant sinners who believe that they are forgiven by God then live lives of forgiveness.

In this place, every Sunday, every Wednesday, every Feast Day, and at other times, the ancient rite of confession and absolution occurs to prepare hearts and minds for the Service of the Word and the Service of the Sacrament. This miracle of God's forgiveness is offered freely in the homes of shut-ins, at death beds for the mortally living, and wherever it is requested. Forgiveness is yours to request whenever and wherever you may think or feel the need for God's absolution. That is you may confess before God, and one another, your sins against Him and against your neighbor, fully trusting that God has forgiven you in the absolution you receive.

Living under forgiveness is the direction that the section for today from the Letter to the Ephesians takes. St. Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, directed the words you heard this morning to be directed first to the congregation in Ephesus God founded through him. (Paul may have been rebuking and correcting Christians of errors/sins of which only he knew (He does not name names here). If that was his intent, Paul's Law and Gospel worked in that assembly of sinner/saints. Unlike with the congregation in Corinth for example, the Apostolic teaching about life under forgiveness took only one letter to the Ephesians). If the letter were written with specific people and sins in the Apostle's mind, does that mean that it is not relevant for congregations in

other places and at other times?

The conclusion one must reach is that it is relevant to all Christian congregations in which it is read. The Holy Scriptures are not an assembly of ancient authors' text examples. They are the living, and Spirit-breathing Word of God. This Letter has not been included in the New Testament as a simple example of St. Paul's writing!

Therefore, this week's section of the Letter to the Ephesians has relevance for us. By inclusion, it is pertinent to and for you as a part or member of this Body of Christ. The less than 90 words of this letter quoted in your hearing today are relevant for your life in Christ! That relevance is included in this week's theme:

Repentant sinners who believe that they are forgiven by God then live lives of forgiveness.

First, remember that the words in our Epistle Reading were written by St. Paul to be audibly read to sinner/saints whom God had gathered into a place at a time so that they might receive His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation. Therefore, remember that this Letter's words are for people who are "in the church."

Second, know that this section of the letter uses the plural forms when addressing the people in the congregation. That is, the encouragements and admonitions are for "all of you," or, if you prefer a more deep-South flavor, "y'all," or, for a few of us, "all y'all!" As you hear again the sections of this pericope, keep in the forefront of your mind the reality that these words speak to those who remain parts of one another in Christ's Body.

Third, keep in mind that the explanation and proclamation that is about to follow is predicated upon the divinely revealed knowledge that Jesus is the Head of the Body, and

that you and I are parts attached to that Body and perform specific functions of the Body. Not all who are joined into this Body of Christ have the same skills, talents, wisdom, learning, or work in the Body. Yet all, functioning together under Christ our Head, perform greater good than any parts that attempt to work alone. All that having been revealed, hear again this week's theme:

Repentant sinners who believe that they are forgiven by God then live lives of forgiveness.

Now, hear a translation of the beginning of this week's text for the Christian congregation in Ephesus of long ago, and the congregation in Catalina now:

All of you put off the old man according to the first manner of life, the one continually being corrupted with the lusts of the deceit...¹

This section begins with a teaching that those Christians, and you dear ones in Christ, were taught by Jesus through His sent ones. That is you, particularly you who have been catechized with Dr. Luther's Small Catechism, have memorized, and learned to live under words like these regarding life under Baptism:

(Baptizing with water) indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.²

Both the Word of God for this week, and that section of the Catechism, use two terms with which you are familiar. They are Old Adam/New Adam, or old man/new man, or old nature/new nature. These terms, as you will recall, describe the person of the Christian in this life. Further, from St. Paul's words for the week, you have heard

¹Ephesians 4:22.

²S.C. p.25.

what is now summarized - the old self produces the fruit of the lie, anger with sin and stealing. The new self produces the fruit of the truth, anger without sin, and work to our neighbor's good.

The old man is the sinful nature which every human receives as an inborn contagious disease. It is a pervasive condition that brings death to all humans. Only one Man was ever conceived and subsequently born without it. That Man is Jesus. Everyone else, from the first children of Adam and Eve to their last descendants conceived, suffers from this disease and its mortal effects until the Son of Man, Jesus, returns in power and glory with His angels in His train to cast sin, death and hell itself into the Lake of Fire. The Old Man is in every one of you Christians and will be yours to put to death every day of your mortal lives. How?

By returning to your baptism you drown that Old Adam. Baptism is not your response to the grace, love and mercy of God, though false prophets and false churches still teach this sinfilled error. Baptism is God's means of grace in which He chose to bring you the fruits of His love - the merits of Christ's death on the Cross - and His mercy - shown in the resurrection of the Christ. Jesus' death is your death and His resurrection has become your resurrection! That is living the Christian life in this fallen world, living under baptism, under God's forgiveness. Hear again our theme:

Repentant sinners who believe that they are forgiven by God then live lives of forgiveness.

And hear aging the opening words of St. Paul for this week:

All of you put off the old man according to the first manner of life, the one continually being

corrupted with the lusts of the deceit...³

Again you have been taught to put off that old man, that sinful nature, that which belongs to you by virtue of your humanity. Just so you know how that Old Adam is viewed by God, you have been given a description of life in sin. That is, it is a life that is a lie. It is continually decaying, putrefying as dead things do, in accordance with the desires of falsehood. That is, the old man in you brings you nothing lasting through lusts for things which lead to mortal death and eternal separation from God.

That describes the first category, or column, that is drawn from St. Paul's teaching for this week. The Old Nature and its fruits – sin, decay, accompanying the devil into death and hell. Now, the Apostle brings into the ears of His God-assembled congregation the second category, the greater column heading. Hear the Gospel of the Lord for those who are daily drowning their Old Adam with all his sinful desires:

And being made new again by the Spirit in the mind of all of you and be clothed by the new man, the one according to God having been created in righteousness and piety of the truth.⁴

First, you Christians in the congregation had a reminder of the Law and how God wants it used in your daily lives – to put the Old Nature to death. Now, you who are Christians in this Body of Christ have a reminder of the Gospel and how God uses it in your daily lives – to raise up the new man to live before God in righteousness and purity. Putting off the old nature is hard work, accomplished only by the Law – remember you confessed, “I, a poor, miserable sinner...” The new nature, the New Adam in Christ, is

³*Ephesians 4:22.*

⁴*Ephesians 4:23-24.*

work done by God for you and in you. There is no mistake in the text rendering that reads: *being made new again by the Spirit in the mind of all of you*. The mind, that is the center of thinking, not of being or feeling, is one for the Christian congregation; it is the mind of Christ. The Spirit, who has joined you to this community to your head Christ Jesus, unites you in the mind of the same.

This unity of mind in Christ is God's work in you, not your response to Him. He is the one who, through the Holy Spirit's effective means – Word and Sacraments – joins you to the mind of Christ. This is not a declaration of some hive mentality or collective thought. (If your mind has drifted to some TV, book or movie drama, tear it back to the here and now!) The Spirit of the living God has made, and daily makes, you Christians one with the mind of Christ. This is the second and greater heading for the arguments that follow in this section of the Letter. The Old Man is overshadowed, in quantity and quality of description, by the New Man. Now, with those major headings for the Christian's daily life in place, hear the results of the killing of Old Adam and the rising of New Adam in you:

Therefore all of you having put off the lie, all of you must speak truth each with his neighbor, because we remain members of one another.

All of you be angry and do not continue to sin; the sun must not go down upon your wrath...⁵

That is, having drowned the Old Adam, you are free to fulfill the second Table of the Law. This is a continuation of the Church's texts from a few weeks ago regarding the two greatest commandments. Having loved God, by not rejecting His blood-bought

forgiveness, you are now free to sacrificially love your neighbor as yourself. Are you continuing to grasp how the texts for this part of the Church Year interlock? Remember,

Repentant sinners who believe that they are forgiven by God then live lives of forgiveness.

Did you also note that the Christian congregation may have righteous anger? That you, as part of the whole joined by the Spirit of God and kept here through His means, may actually hold wrath, God's wrath –for you are connected to the same Christ who in righteous anger drove the moneychangers from the Temple of old – and not sin! You are free to not sin in your anger! No one without Christ's faith has that power. That is a part of living in the New Man (and it is something to remember this election time when you consider the murder of the pre-born, or the slaughter through euthanasia of the elderly). Hear again the Word, as St. Paul works to close his section of Old Man/New Man contrasts:

And all of you must not continue to give place to the slanderer.⁶

That is an admonition that connects the teachings just heard with the instructions that will immediately follow. The Christian members of the Body of Christ, by holding to just anger, and amending their sinful ways, do not allow the devil to gain a foothold among us. (And he has tried here in many ways over the past quarter century. The devil tried to destroy this body by assisting in the fall of a pastor. He lost. The devil pressed this Body of Christ with regard to plant and equipment. He lost. The slanderer presses us now financially as we as a congregation united in the Spirit live out lives of forgiveness in order to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He will not win, for the devil cannot win as we in the Body cling to Christ our head by the power of the Spirit working

⁵ *Ephesians* 4:25-26.

⁶ *Ephesians* 4:27.

through the means of grace! He has been defeated on the cross). Hear again this Body of Christ's theme for the week:

Repentant sinners who believe that they are forgiven by God then live lives of forgiveness.

The lesser Old Man is now contrasted with the greater New Man as St. Paul continues with a particular, perhaps specific illustration of life in the Body of Christ:

The one having been stealing, no longer must he continue to steal; but rather he must continue to labor, continually working to the good with his own hands, in order that he might share with the one having need.⁷

That illustration sums up the Christian's daily work against the Old Man while remaining in the New Man bound to our head Christ as members of His Body. The Old Adam's work, drowned daily in the water and Word of Holy Baptism, is stopped. That which he would have done for evil now becomes, by the same parts of the body, the hands, the means that are used for doing good, for neighbor and for God. The old self produces fruit of the lie, anger with sin and stealing. The new self produces fruit of the truth, anger without sin, and work to our neighbor's good. Or, as you have heard it repeated, the Church recalls:

Repentant sinners who believe that they are forgiven by God then live lives of forgiveness.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Trinity XIX (LSB One-year series)

Genesis 28:10-17; Ephesians 4:22-28; Matthew 9:1-8

September 28, 2008

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

⁷ Ephesians 4:28.

Second translation draft:

*Put off, all of you, according to the first manner of life the old man, the one continually being corrupted with the lusts of the deceit,
And being made new again by the Spirit of the mind of all of you
And be clothed by the new man, the one according to God having been created in righteousness and piety of the truth.*

Therefore all of you having put off the lie, all of you must speak truth each with the neighbor of him, because we remain of one another parts.

All of you must continue wrath and not continue to sin; the sun must not go down upon the wrathfulness of you all,

And not you all must continue to give place to the slanderer.

The one having been stealing, no longer must he continue to steal, but rather he must continue to work with effort, continually working with his own hands for the good, in order that he might share with the one need continually having.⁸

NOTES:

BOC references.

209.169 Thus Gregory says about restitution that penitence is false if it does not satisfy those whose property we have taken.⁶ Anyone who keeps on stealing is not really sorry that he has stolen or robbed, for he is still a thief and a robber as long as he unjustly holds on to another man's property. Civil restitution is necessary, as it is written (Eph. 4:28), "Let the thief no longer steal." Similarly, Chrysostom says, "In the heart contrition, in the mouth confession, in the deed complete humility."⁷ This proves nothing against us. Good works ought to follow penitence, and penitence ought to be not a fraud but an improvement of the total life.

Furthermore, the Fathers wrote that once in a lifetime was enough for the sort of public or formal penitence described by the canons dealing with satisfactions.⁸ From this it is clear that they did not regard these canons as necessary for the forgiveness of sins, for they often say that penitence should be shown in other ways besides this formal one required in the canons dealing with satisfactions.⁹

⁸ *Ephesians* 4:22-28.

⁶ Gratian, *Decretum*, II, chap. 33, q.3, *De poenitentia*, d.6, c.6.

⁷ Pseudo-Chrysostom, in *ibid.*, II, chap. 33, q.3, *De poenitentia*, d.1, c.4.

⁸ Probably a misunderstanding of such a passage as Ambrose, *Penitence*, II, 95.

⁹Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia