

Pastor R.R. Krueger
Good Friday
Romans 6:3-4
29 March 2013

It happened, historically, a few hours earlier on that first Good Friday. What? That which seems to have become the most glossed over phrase in the entire Apostles' Creed: namely, *died and was buried*.

But you know, from an historical point of view, I can fully understand why Joseph of Arimethia and Nicodemus were in such a holy hurry as to cause that phrase from The Creed to wind up being so quickly glossed over. Remember that according to orthodox Jewish law and custom, a corpse had to be interred, buried, before sundown on the day of the death. Christ died at 3:00PM; Joseph and Nicodemus had to first secure permission from the officials to claim the body of Jesus; then transport the body to that 'never-yet-used' cave-grave; all this within, approximately, 3 hours. No wonder they were in such a holy hurry.

And, I suspect, that we, 21st Century Christians, are likewise in a holy hurry when we come to that glossed over phrase, *died and was buried*. And I understand why. After all, *He was crucified*, is very important to us because we know and believe that *He was crucified* for us and for our sins. Then we rush, in our holy hurry, to get to *on the third day He rose*; that's most important to us because we know and believe that His Resurrection proves that our sins are forgiven and we, too, shall rise from our graves to join Him and many, many loved one in Heaven. And so, in such a holy hurry, we gloss right over that *died and was buried*.

But hold on! We are not and need not be in such a holy hurry. Not this evening, especially. We'll pause, we'll tarry, we'll think on this phrase: *died and was buried*.

It really happens quite often and quite regularly, does it not? People die and people are buried; either bodily or their cremains. For we Christians, between the death and the burial, there is the funeral Service. But for believers and unbelievers alike, there is always: *died and was buried*. The obituary pages of The Kansas City Star bear ample testimony to that, right? *Buried* – the 'fancy' word for that is 'interment' from the Latin 'in terra', into the earth.

However, sometimes that process is reversed. Usually it is by order of the medical examiner or a judge. That 'reversal' is called an 'exhumation'; again from the Latin 'ex humus', out of the earth. But, for whatever reason there is an exhumation, there is always 're-interment,' a re-burial.

I have had a fair amount of experience in this physical matter of exhumation and re-interment during the five years I served your sister parish, Concordia, in Brentwood, Pennsylvania. You see, the mother-parish in the Greater Pittsburgh area, First Trinity, had her own cemetery, adjacent to the campus of The University of Pittsburgh. In keeping with

the University's expansion plans, they wanted to buy the land on which First Trinity's cemetery stood. First Trinity agreed to the sale but with the provision that the University had to pay for the exhumation, transportation to another cemetery, and the re-interment of all of the graves in that cemetery.

Many of my parishioners at Concordia had members of their families buried there and since, in liturgical custom and understanding, "The Church is the custodian of the body"; it was necessary for me, as Pastor of their parish, to be present and officiate at both the exhumation and the re-interment. Told you I had some experience in this physical matter!

But what about this matter of 'interment-exhumation-re-interment' in the realm of the spiritual? Hopefully it comes as no surprise to you that God's Word, His ever-trustworthy 'thus saith the Lord,' speaks to us and to that question this very evening:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

"DIED AND WAS BURIED"

I. Interment: not His – ours

II. Exhumation: not His – ours

III. No re-interment – because of Him

You noticed, I trust, that our text was not so much addressing Christ's *died and was buried* as it was, does, and is addressing yours and my *died and was buried*! Blessed Martin Luther made use of our text to give foundation to the answer that His Small Catechism asks: namely, *"What does such baptizing with water signify?"* We, with Luther, can answer: *"It signifies that the Old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever."*

Baptism – yours, mine, and the most recent infant to be baptized at our Font – is a most deadly Sacrament! Clearly does our text say so: *"...so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death..."* Yes, I repeat, Baptism is a most deadly Sacrament! It is Baptism. It is not just a social nicety; a giving of a name to the infant; a 'christening.' Ships are christened; sinful infants, children and adults are baptized...*buried/baptized into (Jesus Christ's) death.*

It is in and at Baptism that we are identified with and coupled to the atoning, forgiving death of Jesus Christ. Baptism, therefore, speaks loudly about 'interment.' But not His; ours. So says our text, this clear 'thus saith the Lord' that is before us.

But this same text speak of ‘exhumation’; not His but ours. Listen to The Word: “...*Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*”. If it surprised you to hear me speak of Baptism as a most deadly Sacrament, then draw unending comfort to also be told that Baptism is the most life-giving Sacrament. It is this Sacrament that sets our feet on the spiritual walk of *newness of life*. I have said it before, let me say it again: never say “I was baptized” but always say “I **am** baptized.” Your baptism begins your walk in that *newness of life* and your daily, private and family study of His Word, coupled with faithfully being present at his Rail, strengthens and guides you in your walk of *newness of life*.

But what about ‘re-interment’? Never! No, never! Not because of who we are, but Whose we are. Not because of what we have done but because of what He has done for us, to us, and on behalf of us. ‘Re-interment’, let it not once be named among us!

As we began, I told you that while it is understandable why Joseph and Arimethia and Nicodemus were in such a holy hurry, we would not be. And we are not! We are not, because this sermon isn’t over yet – (ugh!).

Well, my ‘pulpit-part’ of this sermon is; but your ‘pew-part’ and *newness of life* part goes on.

In the very midst of all the work and turmoil of the Reformation, Martin Luther was in the midst of translating the Bible into German, the language of his parishioners and he said that he was truly vexed and tormented by Satan because of the Reformation, in general, and his Bible translation, in particular. No wonder that Satan should be upset!

Luther got up from his desk, walked across his study and took a piece of chalk and wrote on the wall of his study “I am baptized!” Immediately, Luther said, the devil left me and I was filled with peace.

You don’t have to write on your wall when Satan or the sinful world or your own sinful flesh seeks to derail you on your walk of *newness of life*. You have your Baptismal Certificate! I have mine, too! Mine is framed and hanging on the wall of my bedroom. I look at it every morning, knowing that I am baptized regardless of what happens to me that day. I look at it every night and am reminded that I am baptized and that regardless of the sins committed that day or how derailed my walk in *newness of life* might have been, I have my Lord’s forgiveness and His grace.

Cling tightly to your Baptismal Certificate and, even more tightly to this night’s text, for in this text, this unshakeable ‘thus saith the Lord’, you and I have both God’s Word of precaution and His Word of promise!

Amen. a.m.d.g.