

Lectionary Readings: Zechariah 9:9-12; Psalm 145:1-14, 19; Romans 7:14-25a; Matthew 11:25-30

Sermon Title: *Our Redeemer Has Made Us His Own*

Prayer: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of [our] heart[s] be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, [our] Rock and [our] Redeemer.* (Psalm 19:14)

Salutation: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:2)

Text: The Word from God through which the Holy Spirit comes to stir our hearts for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost is our reflection on the Apostles' Creed, the Second Article.

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, is my Lord, “*Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil*” for a purpose (Small Catechism – *Explanation to the Second Article*). Indeed, Jesus, true God and true Man, has become “*my Lord*” for a specific reason.

The purpose and reason is this: “*That I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness*” (Small Catechism – *Explanation to the Second Article*).

I. However, we must ask the question: “*What would keep us from being God’s own and living under Him and His Lordly and Fatherly care?*” Well, as you have heard me say it so many times: Sin, death, and the devil. Indeed, these are the very things that Jesus Christ redeemed and purchased us from by means of His “*holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death*” (Small Catechism – *Explanation to the Second Article*).

So, then, consider our “*old*” reality when we were not “*His own.*” That is, a time when we were enemies of God, separated from God because of our sinful condition (Ephesians 2:1-2). Because of sin, all people die physically and spiritually (Romans 6:23). As such, all humanity is under the tyranny and the slavery of sin, death, and the devil who seeks our eternal destruction.

Therefore, we all stood under the wrath and judgment of God. St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians clearly states our condition: “*We all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind*” (Ephesians 2:3).

We certainly have evidence to prove this:

- Take a look at human history. It has often been characterized by selfishness, hatred, and violence.
- Take a look at your own personal history. Do we not see in ourselves a history of selfishness and hatred, a failure to fear, love, and trust in God above all things?

Despite all the advances in science and technology, humanity has not been able to overcome these inherent problems that plague the human race. No, this “*old reality*” is far too strong to be overcome by human ability and intellect.

In fact, under the power of sin and Satan, there’s actually no desire to overcome it. But, rather to revel in and to live under it. St. Paul states our fallen nature acts: “*For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:17).

What, then, was to become of us, lost and condemned people? Eternal death and hell would have been our ultimate reality if not for the gracious mercy and undeserved favor of God our Father. In our Epistle Reading, we hear the words of the gracious mercy and kindness of God our Father:

“*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*” (Romans 7:24-25).

You see:

- Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, paid the entire penalty of our sin and guilt with His death on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- By His death on the cross in our place, Jesus endured the wrath of God toward all sinners. His death appeased the wrath of God and met its full requirements so that we are now brought back together with God once again (2 Corinthians 5:19).
- Jesus’ atoning death on the cross has then destroyed the power of sin to enslave us (John 8:34-36).

Having therefore defeated sin, Satan, and death itself by His own death and resurrection, Christ brings us once again to our heavenly Father. Jesus’ life, His suffering, death, and glorious resurrection have overcome everything that would keep us from our Father in heaven.

You see, Jesus Christ *died* in order to make us His own and to enable us to *live* under Him and to *serve* Him. Therefore, our salvation and all our happiness rest on Jesus Christ our Lord Who set us free from sin, death, and the power of the devil in order to live under His care and to serve Him and others. That’s what the Bible teaches of Christ’s purpose for you and me.

II. So, then, as good students of the Catechism, we ask:

- “*What does this mean?*”
- “*What does this look like for us in our daily lives?*”

To begin with, we are new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17):

- The “*old*” reality of hostility has been torn down, just as surely as the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom on Good Friday when Jesus gave up His life into death for our sins (Matthew 27:51).
- A “*new*” reality has been put in place by the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of the Son of God-made-flesh.

Then, by God’s re-creative Gospel Word, and by means of water and the Word in Holy Baptism, you have been given saving faith in Jesus Christ so that you each confess Him to be “*my Lord.*”

Therefore, this gift of faith by the work of the Holy Spirit re-created you in Christ to be new creations. And, more specifically, children of God (1 John 3:1; Galatians 4:3-7). Thus, being God’s children through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior means:

- That you and I are the inheritors of life eternal.
- Our sins are forgiven, removed from us as far as the east is from the west by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ (Psalm 103:12).
- We are no longer slaves of sin, Satan, or death.
- You are united with Christ so that He is yours and you are His.
- You now live under God’s rule and care in security and peace.

And, when we do experience and encounter sin in ourselves, we confess it. In other words: “*We lay it on Jesus.*”

Whereby, we have the reassurance in faith that, we receive the joyous exchange of His innocence for our sinfulness as we hear the forgiveness of sins pronounced upon us: “*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*”

Thus, comforted, reassured with ourselves of sins forgiven, we can then meet the needs of those around us as we love and show mercy to people. In other words, through faith in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit:

- We are free from sin, Satan, and death to serve our Lord without fear and without defensiveness.
- We can display what is right to our neighbors because we are confident in the rightness, innocence, and salvation which the Father has given us in Christ through the Spirit.
- We can live in harmony with those around us and meet their needs through joyful – even when painful – Christian service. For we are confident – even in the midst of all trial, trouble, turbulence, trauma, and tragedy – that Christ is risen from the dead and is in charge of everything from now to all eternity.

Therefore, you and I, in the power of the Gospel, serve Jesus as those who belong to Him and live under Him in His kingdom:

- We are no longer under the tyranny and power of Satan, sin, and death.
- We are free to serve our Lord in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness before our Father in heaven.

And that service to our Lord takes place in this world, among the people of this world who have both physical and emotional needs. However, the greatest need is to hear the *Good News* of Jesus who is Lord of all. But in this life, as we live and serve the Lord, we do so in the face of the enemies of Christ and His Church (albeit defeated enemies).

That's why then, as children of God in Christ, we also look forward to the time when these enemies will no longer harass and hinder us from serving our Lord Christ with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Ultimately, we look forward in faith to when we will be "*always with the Lord*" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Conclusion: However, dear friends in Christ, before attaining to life everlasting, in this Christian faith, we believe and confess that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, is our Lord. He redeemed us from sin, death, and the devil with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.

For Christ has truly made us His own so that we really do now live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness as we love and serve our neighbors in Jesus' name. This is most certainly true.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

To God alone the Glory!