

**Lectionary Readings:** Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Romans 6:1-11; Matthew 3:13-17

**Sermon Title:** *Connected to Christ*

**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 Baptism of Our Lord is from our Epistle Reading: Romans, chapter 6.

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ, if I say the words “*hook and loop fastener,*” what am I talking about? Actually, this is the formal name for what most of us know as Velcro. (*Hold up Velcro strips and tear apart loudly.*)

Velcro is so universal and so widely used to connect things in our day and age that everyone can identify that sound. From hospital gowns to iPad holders, Velcro is a universal way of connecting two items together.

St. Paul writes to the Christians in Rome about being connected to Christ. Not through the use of Velcro, of course. Rather, it’s through our Baptism. Paul makes clear that in Baptism God connects us with our Savior, Jesus Christ, both in His death and in His resurrection:

*“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” (Romans 6:4).*

**I.** Now to say that Baptism “*connects us to Christ*” is to say that prior to our Baptism, we were *disconnected* from Christ. The Bible confirms this in no uncertain terms. In fact, “*disconnected*” might be an understatement. In Ephesians 2:

- Paul describes our condition prior to Christ as being “*dead in our trespasses*” (Ephesians 2:5).
- He also describes us by nature as being “*children of wrath*” (Ephesians 2:3).

In other words, by our very nature, as we are conceived and born, we are under the wrath of God because of our sin. St. Paul is quite clear about the evidence and the consequences of sin as the desires of the flesh in Galatians 5:

*“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”* (vv 19-21)

Therefore, to say that we were disconnected from God by our nature is definitely an understatement.

Fortunately, God is at work in Baptism to connect us to Christ. First, God connects us to Christ’s death in and through Baptism. The Apostle Paul writes:

*“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by Baptism into death”* (vv 3-4).

You see, we’re so closely connected with Christ’s death in our Baptism. It’s as if we’ve traveled back nearly two thousand years and are there with Christ, in the tomb with Him dead on Good Friday. And every time we baptize an infant, a child or an adult, God is at work figuratively joining that person, young or old, to the death of Christ.

Now of course, God doesn’t leave us in Christ’s tomb! In Baptism, just as God figuratively buries us with Christ, so He also raises us with Christ to new life. Paul writes:

*“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”* (v 4).

Notice, this *“newness of life”* is something we are walking in right now. It’s not something we have to wait for our death to experience. Rather, we have it right here and now through God’s action in our lives in our Baptism.

**II.** So, what a contrast! We were dead in our trespasses and sins. Now, God has raised us to new life in and through Baptism. This new life is a life in which we no longer live for ourselves, but for Christ, Who brought us back together to God once again.

It is a life in which we no longer live to gratify our sinful desires. But rather live to please our gracious God. This is what Paul means when he writes:

*“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”* (v 11).

Now when you're "*dead*" to something, you don't respond to it – just as a dead person doesn't respond to anyone or anything. So it is, with sin in our lives – "*Consider yourselves dead to sin.*"

And now we see how silly and ridiculous Paul's question at the beginning of this chapter really is. Paul asks:

*"Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!"* (vv 1–2).

In other words, now that we are Christians and our sins are forgiven by the grace of God:

- Should we sin all the more so that God can exercise His grace even more?
- Should we sin in abundance so that God has the opportunity to forgive us even more frequently?

The questions, of course, are absurd. And Paul recognizes it as such. It would be like asking:

- *"Should I set my house on fire so that the fire department can get more practice at putting out house fires?"*
- *"Should I crash my car into a tree so that first responders get more practice in responding to accidents?"*

By no means, indeed!

At the same time, we know that we will not be free from sin this side of heaven. We're still going to sin, even as we walk in this newness of life. However, the difference is that we don't *live* to sin. Instead:

- We repent of our sin daily:
- We, thus, live daily in the forgiveness that is ours in Christ.
- And daily we walk in the newness of life that God gave us in our Baptism.

**III.** And it's a new life that doesn't end when life here on this earth ends. Our connection with Christ in our Baptism has future blessings for us and for all Christians. Paul writes:

*"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"* (v 5).

You see, there's still more to come! Just as Christ was raised from the dead, physically, so will we be raised from the dead! And, so will all who are connected to Christ and His resurrection through Baptism.

This is the sure and certain hope we have as the baptized children of God:

- Death is not the end.
- Death does not have the final say.
- Death, rather, is but a doorway, into an eternal life in the presence of God with all who have gone before us and all who will come after us.

Therefore, those who have gone before us into the presence of the Lord, we await that day when Christ will return. Keeping in mind:

- He will not return in meekness and humility as He came to be with us the first time.
- He will come in all power, glory, and majesty.

You see:

- On that day, our bodies will be raised, just as His body was raised.
- On that day, our bodies will be changed to be like His glorious body.

Our bodies will be, to quote Paul in 1 Corinthians 15: “*incorruptible, imperishable, and immortal.*”

In other words:

- Our bodies will no longer suffer any of the effects of sin – no arthritis, no cancer, no high blood pressure, no heart attacks.
- And our bodies will no longer be subject to death, for death itself, the penalty for sin, will be no more.

And:

- On that day, all of humanity will stand before Christ.
- On that day, the books will be opened.

**Conclusion:** However, dear friends in Christ, you need not be afraid. Your name is written in the Book of Life. Then, you will be eternally as you are today: *Connected to Christ.*

In the name of ✠ Jesus, Who forgives all your sins. Amen.

***To God alone the Glory!***