

**Lectionary Readings:** Deuteronomy 7:6-9; Psalm 125; Romans 8:28-39; Matthew 13:44-52

**Sermon Title:** *Death, Resurrection, Life Everlasting*

**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 Eighth Sunday after Pentecost is our reflection on the Apostles' Creed, the Third Article.

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ, today we come to the conclusion of the sermon series on The Apostles' Creed. It is my sincere prayer that you have been blessed by it as you have heard the work of the Triune God for you as:

- Your Creator and Preserver.
- Your Redeemer and Savior.
- And the Spirit, Who makes you holy by the Gospel, so that you belong to Christ and are at peace with the Father Whom you love and serve by grace through faith.

Therefore, it is appropriate that we conclude with such a firm confession of what we believe, teach, and confess as Christians, namely: *"I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."*

Because of Jesus' perfect life, His suffering, death, and resurrection:

- There is for you the complete forgiveness of sins.
- And where there is forgiveness, there is also eternal life and salvation from sin, Satan, and death.

**I.** No doubt you have heard the cliché: *"Nothing is certain in life except death and taxes."* We daily deal with the reality of death. A day doesn't go by where death is not prevalent in the newspaper either in current events or in the obituaries. All of us have been affected by the death of someone in our families or by the death of a friend.

Death, however, was not a part of God's original creation. God didn't create people to die. Death, rather, is the punishment of sin. That does explain the natural horror of death that we experience.

How did death enter the world? Death, entered the world through sin:

- We hear it from Romans 5: *“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned”* (Romans 5:12).
- Again we hear in 1 Corinthians: *“By a man came death. . . . For as in Adam all die”* (15:21).

You see, no matter the physical cause of our bodily death, all people die because they are sinners. Therefore, we can pray along with the psalmist:

*“For we are brought to an end by [God’s] anger; by Your wrath we are dismayed. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence. For all our days pass away under Your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh”* (Psalm 90:7-9).

Death, then, is the ultimate message of the Law. As the body lies in the casket:

- We see the punishment for sin in all its ugliness and horror.
- We see before our eyes the wages of a fallen creation.

People who do all that they can to live, who do all that they can to avoid death – all die. There is no medicine, no science, no charm that can prevent the fatal blow. A person who was created to live is now born to die. For the way through life leads but to the grave.

**II.** However, it is to death and the grave that God sent His One-of-a-Kind Son. Thanks be to God, the Son of God took upon Himself our human flesh, yet without sin. Therefore, by His sacrificial act, in order that He might willingly give up His life into death on behalf of humanity.

As the Good Shepherd Himself said:

*“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father”* (John. 10:17-18).

That is the great grace and undeserved favor of the Triune God. St. Paul in Ephesians writes of God’s love:

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

You see, the gift of God the Father is God the Son. For the sinless God-Man Jesus Christ was made to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21a), as He assumed the full responsibility for:

- Our original sin.
- As well as for all the things we have done contrary to God's Law, and the good things we have failed to do.

On the cross:

- Jesus gave up His life into the power of death, as He paid the entire penalty of our sins.
- By His sacrificial, substitutionary death on the cross for us, Jesus fully endured God's wrath toward all people.
- Jesus faced death and hell itself, separation from God the Father, so that the power of death and hell would be defeated.

You see, Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the grave accomplished all this for you. Therefore:

- By His sacrificial death and the shedding of His blood, Christ destroyed the power of sin to enslave you.
- Christ appeased the wrath of God, reconciling you to Father, canceling the debt of your sins.
- And on the third day, Jesus, true God and true Man, rose bodily from the grave.

So, it is with Gospel acclamation:

*"Our Savior Christ Jesus . . . abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"* (2 Timothy 1:10).

For the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation, is just that:

*That Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of Man, suffered death and hell on the cross in your place and rose again from the dead winning the complete forgiveness of sins for you.*

Indeed, with His own precious blood purchased your eternal life and salvation from death itself.

Then, to confirm what Christ has done for you from the cross, it is His resurrection that guarantees your bodily resurrection from death. For the Word of God Himself promises this to you (cf. 1 Corinthians 15).

Therefore, you as a believer in Christ, death has lost its sting because you have the full forgiveness of sins. Death is the wages of sin. However:

- Christ has delivered you from sin.
- And so, He has also delivered you from the power of death.

Therefore, you do not need to fear death because Christ's death and resurrection have destroyed the power of the devil and delivered you "*Who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery*" (Hebrews. 2:15). Rather:

- You have the assurance of faith that you can depart this life in peace with sins forgiven.
- You can be confident that you have eternal life and that the resurrection of the body awaits you on the Last Day.

You see, the Father through the saving work of His Son in the power of the Holy Spirit has given to you a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). This means:

- When you are raised in body and soul on the day of Christ's Second Coming, you will enjoy being with Christ in His new creation forever.
- A new heaven and earth await you on the day of resurrection where you will live with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- That, then, together with the whole body of Christ, the Church, to live forever and ever, enjoying the resurrection life of glory.

Luther from the Large Catechism on the Third Article, has this to say about the work of the Holy Spirit:

*"For we have already received creation. Redemption, too, is finished. But the Holy Spirit carries on His work without ceasing to the Last Day. For that purpose He has appointed a congregation upon earth by which He speaks and does everything. For He has not yet brought together all His Christian Church [Christenheit] [John 10:16] or granted all forgiveness. Therefore, we believe in Him who daily brings us into the fellowship of this Christian Church through the Word. Through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins He bestows, increases, and strengthens faith. So when He has done it all, and we abide in this and die to the world and to all evil, He may finally make us perfectly and forever holy. Even now we expect this in faith through the Word"* (Large Catechism, Part 2, Article III, 61-62).

**Conclusion:** Therefore, dear friends in Christ, expect in faith what your God has promised in His Word – forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. This is most certainly true! And so, shall we say together: *Amen and Amen.*

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

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