

Sermon Romans 6 1 11 1st Sunday after Epiphany Series A

Sermon: 1st Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Romans 6:1-11

Theme: We live a new life since our Baptism

Goal: God empowers us through our Baptism to live a new life

Dear Friends,

Introduction: The Baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of His public ministry. From the life He had lived before His Baptism in Nazareth, as the son of Joseph, the carpenter, and Mary, He is now revealed as The Beloved Son of God by the voice that came from heaven and by the Holy Spirit which descended upon Him. When John the Baptist was trying to deter Him to be baptized, because John knew that Jesus was without sin and didn't need the Baptism for forgiveness, Jesus answered: "Let it be so now, it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." Jesus was fully aware that He has not come for Himself, but He came on our behalf, to do whatever we were unable to do. His proposal was, and He really accomplished it, to take what belonged to us and to give us what belonged to Him. So, the Son of God took our human nature upon Himself and obeyed the Law for our sake, and He took also our sins and iniquities upon Himself to pay for them even the penalty of death. As a result of His perfect obedience and death, by His resurrection He offers us what He conquered: Forgiveness of sins and a new life, the life of children of God. How does He give these gifts to us? He doesn't pour them out from heaven directly, but He gives His blessings through the Means of Grace: Through His Word and through the Sacraments of the Baptism and of the Holy Supper.

*I - United with Christ in Baptism we **receive** a new life*

Paul argues in our text that something very unique and special happens when we are baptized. He links our baptism to the death and resurrection of Christ. Whatever Jesus did is as we had done it.

His death is our death. Our sins were paid for on the cross and were buried. The sins are dead. They no longer exist. - On the other hand, His resurrection is our resurrection; His new life is our new life. - How and when does this happen? This happens when we are baptized! We are new creatures since our Baptism; we are beloved children of God like Jesus is!

Sometimes we don't "feel" what it means to have a new life in Christ; we don't sense the difference between a "before" and an "after". This happens because most of us were baptized when we were little children and all our life is a new life in Christ. We grew up in a Christian family and have been part of a Christian Church as far as we can remember it in our childhood. Most of us don't have the experience that someone has who was really lost in his sins: drunkenness, sexual immorality, hopelessness, drug addiction, etc. and then he/she finds Christ and the forgiveness by faith. This person can really talk about a "before" and an "after" in his/her life! The new life in Christ has a special taste! - We thank God if we didn't have the need to eat the food given to pigs, as it happened to the Prodigal son before he came back home repentant.

But the new life is not just a matter of "feeling" but a matter of believing in what God did for us through Christ in our Baptism. We are united with Christ in a new life. We embrace the confession of Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20).

*II – United with Christ in Baptism we **live** a new life*

But, honestly speaking, it is not always so in our lives. We feel oppressed by temptations, we still sin and don't do what God's will is; our fellowship with Christ seems to be very far some days, and our conscience accuses us. We desperately cry out like Paul cried from

the depth of his heart: “I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out...What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” But immediately after this when his faith almost collapsed, Paul confesses: “Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord”! (Romans 7:18, 24, 25). He knew where to look for support and strength: He always went back to His Saviour, in which name Paul was baptized!

The new life in Christ is not an accommodated and easy life. The battle begins when we are baptized. Jesus enters our life, but the devil will always come back to grab us for himself again. Luther explains this in his 4th part of the baptism’s explanation in the Small Catechism. Luther raises a question: *What does such baptizing with water indicate?* And he gives the answer: *It 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.*

Are you happy with the style of life you are living as a Christian? Are you frustrated? Do you want to improve your Christian life? *Who of us does not want to live right and to do what is good? A source of power for such living is our baptism.* (Series A p. 163). We can always go back to the very beginning of our new life in Christ, to our baptism, renewing daily the Covenant God made with us. Luther used to say when he was tempted: *I am baptized!* This means: I belong to God!

Some tips how to do it: It’s impossible to enter a pigsty without becoming dirty. This means: Don’t enter a pigsty! Don’t go where the sin runs free! Don’t expose yourself to temptations! Paul is very clear when he says: “Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed,

which is idolatry... You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips."

On the other hand, Paul says: "You have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of the Creator... Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience... And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

(Colossians 3:5-14).

Conclusion: Do you want a new chance of life in the New Year? God gives you 365 days of new opportunities anew. 12 out of the 365 have already passed. "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!" The new life in Christ bestowed on us in our Baptism is strengthened by the celestial food: God's Word and the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Communion. We encourage each other in our fellowship and when we counsel and comfort each other in our personal situations. As baptized children we all believe in God's grace in Christ. We have a common ground and we believe that the door of God's house is open to our prayers and to receive us when our last hour comes. As long as God allows us to live in the fellowship of our family and friends, we will fight the good fight to suppress temptations and to obey God's commandments. Our Baptism will be fully fulfilled when God calls us to His eternal home. As long as this time doesn't come, we rely in His promises and live the life He offers us, with all its challenges, blessings, sorrows and happiness, enjoying the status of beloved, baptized children of God. Amen.