

Sermon Romans 5 12 19 1st Sunday in Lent series A

Sermon: 1st Sunday in Lent

Text: Romans 5:12-19 (vv.18, 19)

Theme: Guilty or not guilty.

Goal: In spite of our guiltiness, God declares us not guilty on behalf of Christ.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: We are watching Oscar Pistorius' murder trial. He pleads himself not guilty. The accusation tries to prove that he is guilty. What will be the verdict?

Guilty but not guilty anymore: This is the theme Paul develops in our text, contrasting Adam and Christ, the guilty and the non-guilty. What have these old stories to do with our lives?

I – Adam and the original sin: Guilty

The Old Testament reading presents when Adam and Eve fall in sin. They didn't resist the temptation and disobeyed God's Law. They had only one commandment to obey. We read: "And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (Genesis 2:16, 17). They didn't die that same day, but they became mortal creatures. Like a hereditary disease, sin passed to all their descendants; and with sin, death. Paul's statement about this in our text is: "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people... the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men." This is called in Theology, Original Sin.

Many other texts of the Bible confirm this sad reality, just to mention some:

Psalm 51:5: “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

Psalm 58:3: “Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies.”

Genesis 8:21: “Every inclination of his (man’s) heart is evil from childhood.”

Romans 3:10, 11: “There is no one righteous, not even one...there is no one who does good, not even one.”

This is one of the reasons why we baptize children: They inherit the original sin of their parents since Adam and Eve, and are condemned. We thank God that He has made the Baptism a Means of Grace to reach children with His grace of forgiveness and eternal life.

We need to be aware of this sad reality: The disobedience of Adam and Eve still affects us nowadays. We are by nature guilty as they were found guilty by God and were expelled from the presence of God.

II – Christ and His obedience: non-guilty

On the other hand, the Gospel for today presents the Temptation of Jesus and how He resisted to Satan, being obedient to the Father in all things. This was only the beginning of His fight against the big Enemy. The last battle happened on the cross, when the old serpent struck His heel; but He crushed its head forever, according to the first prophecy spoken just after the fall (Genesis 3:15). Jesus won the battle and showed Himself victorious and alive on Easter Sunday!

Paul recalls this perfect obedience of Jesus and His victory in our text. And he sets it in contrast with the disobedience of Adam:

“Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man

(Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Jesus) the many will be made righteous.”

What Jesus did is called a “gift of God”: “For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!” *As Adam sin brought universal ruin on the human race, Christ, through one righteous act, brought universal blessing.* (CSSB 1724).

This is the Good News of Lent and Easter: The gift of God overflows to us! We are not guilty anymore, by God’s grace! The condemnation that was upon us by the Original Sin and by our Actual Sins was removed by the obedience of Christ on our behalf. - In human trials it is not possible for one to pay for another. Nobody can sit on Pistorius’ murder trial seat; he is responsible to answer for what he did and to pay for it if he is declared guilty. But in God’s trial, Jesus took our seat on God’s trial, He took over Him our guilt and pay for it on the cross. Now He offers His non-guiltiness to us. The condemned person receives a gift and is absolved by God’s grace! He is declared non-guilty! - Can someone deny God’s offer? Can someone despise God’s gift? Unfortunately many do it. Blessed are those who believe and accept the gift of God! As non-guilty, we are free to live a new life under God’s blessings!

III – We: Guilty but non-guilty

As long as we live in this live, the battle goes on. As non-guilty in the eyes of God by faith in Jesus we live a new life according to God’s will. But the Old Adam sticks on us and will not leave us. He always accuses us that we are still guilty. We are constantly tempted by our own conscience and by the devil. We know by experience this very well. Luther defined this status as *simmul justus et peccator*, this means, simultaneous righteous and sinners. Therefore we have to go

back to our baptism every day. Our Baptism is like a white dress that God gave us when we were baptized. We have to wear it always. Even if the borders become dirty while we walk and the dust of sin sticks on us, by daily repentance and forgiveness our clothes are washed and cleansed again. (IL, 72, 124; OSe1 7, 430). This is what Luther explained in The Fourth Part of the Baptism in the Small Catechism: *“What does such baptizing with water indicate? 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.”*

Conclusion: *Adam’s sin brought condemnation, death and separation from God; the gift of Christ brought justification despite our many sins. Ultimately, Adam’s action led to the reign of death, but Jesus’ action means that those who receive God’s grace will reign in life.* (ABC 1360). Those who follow Adam by their own will are walking to eternal condemnation. Those who follow Christ by God's grace will live and reign with Him forever. There is not a third alternative way. God offers us life or death, salvation or condemnation.

Thanks be to God that “the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ... For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!” Therefore we sing in our liturgy, *“Bless we the Lord. – Thanks be to God”*. Amen.

(Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, 09 March 2014)