

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Fifth Sunday After Trinity, July 5, 2015

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 369, 373:1, 377:1-6, 385:1-4, 373:7

Lessons: Exodus 20:1-17, Romans 7:14-25, Matthew 22:34-40.

Sermon Text: Romans 5:12-15.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The fundamental teachings of Scripture are sin and grace. Law and Gospel. Without both of these, there can be no Christian teaching or preaching. In summary, the Law of God shows us our sinfulness, and the Gospel shows us salvation from our sinfulness.

Our sermon today shows a sharp contrast between Law and Gospel.

There are people who think of the Law of God as a ladder by which they can climb their way into heaven and eternal life. That is not the case at all. No way! The Law of God, as summarized in the Ten Commandments, shows us our sinfulness and our inability to please God at all. Today you are reminded again that

ETERNAL LIFE IS A GIFT OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST JESUS

- 1. Sin came through Adam and all have sinned.**
- 2. Death came through Adam and all have death hanging over them.**
- 3. Eternal life comes through Jesus Christ, a sinless descendant of the sinful Adam.**

Paul repeats and establishes this fact: all are sinners. *“Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.”*

This is a fact, though there are those who deny or reject the Bible’s teachings about sin. But because there is surely a great deal of wickedness in the world, it would be very hard for even those wisest in humanly wisdom to claim that there is no such thing as evil and wickedness, which God calls sin, in the world.

But even among those who acknowledge that there might be such a thing as “sin”, there are those who deny original sin. There have been those who feel that wickedness is learned, that at birth a child is sort of a blank page ready to be taught either good or evil by those around it. But when even parents can observe and experience the behavior of tiny infants they must admit the fact which the Psalmist tells us: *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”* (Psalm 51:5)

Sin is here – here to stay until judgment day. We usually speak of sin in two ways or two types of sin: “original sin” and “actual sin”.

“Original sin”, hereditary guilt and depravity, includes also the tendency to sin, and only to sin. Paul makes that clear several chapters later in Romans: *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”* (Romans 7:18 KJV) From another translation we read *“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”* (NIV)

We also must admit that there is such a thing as what is called “actual sin”, that is, sins that are actually committed by a human whether they be done in deeds, in words, or even in thoughts. Actual sin, of course, is both sins of commission and sins of omission. Commission means the sins that we do. Omission means the obedience to God that we do not do.

Paul makes it clear how all this sinfulness came into the world. It came *“through one man”* and he names that man: Adam, the first man, originally created by God to be holy and sinless.

Sin came through one man – the first man and his wife. Yes, Eve sinned first, but Adam, the head of the family also sinned. In fact, “old Adam” is one name for this depravity, along with terms such as “flesh”, “*old man*” and “*old self*” (Romans 6:9), “*sin living in me*” (Romans 7:17 NIV), and “*the sinful nature.*” (Romans 8:8 NIV)

But sin wasn't the only penalty that came into the world from and through Adam and Eve. We also learn that death came into the world as a result of sin. “*In this way death came to all men, because all sinned.*” Every human must die physically. No man, no human is exempt from death. That has never happened and never will happen. As a result, no one will live forever without faith in God, despite man's earthly hopes and goals, despite dreams of living forever. It is hard to imagine no death. Man has tried some unusual attempts and desperate measures at living forever. One, called cryogenics, involves freezing a body immediately upon death and planning to bring it back to life when supposedly there will be a cure for the disease that killed the person. This seems more like science-fiction than real possibility.

Adam and Eve died, both spiritually and physically. Not only did death come upon all men as a result of Adam's sins, but death comes upon all men because they themselves sin. It is a sort of a double whammy.

We can't just blame death on Adam and think that we are better people, or we have earned or deserve some better treatment from God than Adam got. “*All sinned.*” Everyone, without exception, is a sinner.

Then Paul goes on to answer an argument that some might have. The argument he refutes is this: What about those who died before God gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai? The argument goes that ‘they didn't have any law to break, so how could anyone say they sinned?’ The Word of God tells us “*for before the law was given, sin was in the world.*” Even before God gave the law on Mount Sinai there was sin. Everyone, every single human being sinned. Adam and Eve knew what God commanded, and they broke God's commands. All of their descendants, too, broke God's commands.

Scripture tells us plainly that the requirements of God's Law are written into the hearts of all men. In Romans 2 we read “*Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.*” (Romans 2:14-15)

When God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, the offense of sin, which all men intuitively recognized, was expressed clearly in written form as revelation from God.

Although Gentiles did not specifically receive the written Law of Moses, they are not oblivious to the basic principles of God's law. The essence of the law is engraved in their hearts. Conscience, though perhaps seared and distorted, contributes its own testimony, while man's intellect either adds its own accusation or else concocts schemes to try to evade the intuitive witness concerning God's law. Consequently, Gentiles belonging even to the most primitive peoples are guilty of rebellion against God's law.

But you, too, might wonder how can we be declared guilty for something Adam did thousands of years ago? Many feel it isn't right. Yet we read both in Exodus and Deuteronomy the words Luther quotes when he asks “*What does this God say about all these commandments? He says, “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*” (See Exodus 20:6 and Deuteronomy 5:10) *What does this mean?* God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands. But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in him and gladly obey what he commands.” This shows us the grace of God. Those who do not believe in God may suffer because of God's threat to the third and fourth generation. If parents or grandparents don't believe in Jesus, how will their children or grandchildren learn, unless you tell them? Three or four generations might be 90 or a hundred years. Compare that with God's love and mercy! A thousand generation is 25,000 to 35,000 years! So great is God's love and mercy!

God judges mankind because of Adam's sin, and each of us shows we are just as sinful as Adam by our own actual sins, each day. We are made of the same stuff and are prone to rebel and we are judged for the sins we commit. Because we are sinners, it isn't fairness we need, it is mercy.

A few verses later in Romans we read ***“The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** (Romans 5:20-21)

Law was added to help people see their sinfulness, to show them the seriousness of their sins and to drive them to God for mercy and pardon. Sin is a deep discrepancy between who we are and who we were created to be. Law points out our sin and places it squarely on our shoulders. Law offers no remedy to be healed or cleansed from sin.

When we are convicted of sin, we must turn to Jesus Christ for healing. ***“Death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.”*** Death ruled all men, from the very first man created up until God’s law was given in writing, written on stone. And death has ruled all men ever since, too.

Adam was a “pattern”, a model, a picture, a symbol, a type of Christ, the Savior, who, although he was true man, was the sinless son of Adam. Jesus became true man at his conception by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary.

Paul writes to the Corinthians ***“So it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being;’ the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.”*** (1 Corinthians 15:45 NIV)

Paul writes ***“But the gift is not like the trespass”***. The gift is the gift of grace, the gift which is freely provided for sinners in the Gospel. We are justified, that is, declared not guilty because of what Jesus Christ did.

“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!”

How many humans are sinners? All of them. So who is ***“the many”*** who died? It is all men. So also ***“the many”*** is again all men, who are justified by God through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ died for all men. Yet many choose to ignore that fact, reject that fact, deny that fact and so they are lost eternally, condemned to eternal damnation because of their own fault. For them, the work of Jesus is wasted.

And Paul emphasizes that by emphasizing ***“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!”*** If all sinned, thus ***“how much more”*** are all included in the salvation that comes by Christ Jesus.

We can only be comforted and assured by these words from First Timothy: ***“[Prayer] is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”*** (1 Timothy 2:3-4 NIV)

So although Paul here speaks extensively of sin, he also begins here to speak abundantly of God’s grace. That is mercy, the undeserved love of God for mankind. He repeats: ***“Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.”*** The gift of God redeemed mankind from judgment. Judgment followed sin and condemned mankind to eternal death. But the gift came, in God’s right time, following all the sinful thoughts, words, and deeds of all who had previously lived, and brought justification – for all who will ever live!

What a beautiful picture, that we have the joy of being justified. This is a joy and happiness that gives comfort to us even now on earth.

What a beautiful picture that is, knowing that you have the gift of God which forgives your sins and justifies you before God. May we never lose, may we never forget, may we always hear and believe that promise. Amen.