



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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July 24, 2011
6th Sunday after Pentecost
Sermon Text: [Romans 6:1b-11](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Jeremiah 28:5-9](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 89](#)
Second Lesson: [Romans 6:1b-11](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 10:34-42](#)

The Christian Faith, One Word at a Time: *Buried*

Television shows, movies... when they want to enhance suspense they often involve someone being buried alive, don't they? Being buried alive, put underground, in a box, having dirt thrown on you, having something like that go on is something that does kind of make your pulse quicken as you think about it. It's not something I'd want to endure. It's something I'm sure you'd want to go through for kicks on a warm day saying, "Maybe it's a little cooler under there." I don't think any of us are going to think that. We know that isn't how it works. It would be terrifying.

Yet, in a very real sense, what I just read to you told you that each one of you that have been baptized have been buried. You've been buried with Christ into his death. Buried to be made alive, not buried alive so that you would die. Buried alive in baptism. That is what God is telling us happens to us.

So as we continue to look at The Christian Faith, One Word at a Time, these things that Paul focuses on as we are going through Romans, this morning you can take your pick. You can take the word *buried* or *baptism* because what he is telling us is that they both achieve the same things for us. But we who have been baptized into Christ have been buried with him into his death.

Why would he say something like that? That just seems to come out of nowhere, doesn't it? Why would you use that image? Well, at the end of Chapter 5 he was talking about the Law and how we have been set free from the Law and how we are justified by faith. Faith that Jesus lived and died in our place is what declares us not guilty, not the Law. By that he means not what we do, not our being good or doing good. That doesn't make us right with God because it doesn't remove the sins we have committed. The sins we commit deserve death.

So what is the purpose of the Law? One of the things he says at the end of the chapter is that the Law was given so that sins might increase. Now your sinful nature hears that; your sinful nature and my sinful nature is warped, it's twisted. It hears that and says, "Hey, that's a good idea! Let's sin more so that God's grace looks better." So Paul is answering someone that is going to say that before they say it. "What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" No. That's not how it works. The Law was added so that sin might increase so that we could see clearly what we are. We do what we are. Because we are sinners, we hear the Law that says "don't do this" and immediately we want to do it. It's kind of like that wet paint sign.

That's what it's saying. The Law just shows us, "This is what you are." The Law says don't covet; you start coveting. The Law says don't look at someone with lust in your heart; you start lusting. This is what we are and what we do. We can deny it or find other people that we think are worse than we are, but he's saying the Law was given so you would just see what you are so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable before God. We are sinners.

The answer to sin isn't in doing better or being better. The answer to sin, the point he has been making is it's in Jesus. He did it for you. He was perfect because God demands perfection of you. He took the punishment your sins deserve. He carried them to the cross. Faith in that sets you free.

Now he is saying "To those of you that think I am going to make God look better by sinning more," which is basically saying, "I'm going to do what I want to do, and I'm going to try to dress it up with some God words to make it look better," he says you can't do that. Think about what happened to you in your baptism. In your baptism, you were baptized into Christ Jesus. You were baptized into his death. What that means is that you were buried with him through baptism into death so that just like Christ rose from the dead, we too rise from our baptism to live a new life because we have died to sin. That's the point he is making. We've been buried with Christ in baptism. We've died to sin.

When we are born in this world, sin controls us. All of our righteous acts are like filthy rags because even the good we do, we are not doing it out of love for God. God says anything that's not done out of love for him is not pleasing in his eyes. It's not a good work.

We are born connected to the Law and we don't do it, so we see that we are sinners, and our guilt increases and increases and increases until God comes and takes it away. For the vast majority of us here, I'm sure that was at our baptism when we don't even remember it. We possibly don't really know a time when we didn't know God unless we have fallen away later in life and the Lord in his love has let us back.

This is the difference... you and I who have been baptized into Christ know that we have died to sin. We've been connected to Christ, and his love has washed away our sins. When the waters roll over us, we are connected to Christ's death and to his resurrection. That means we've been set free from sin. We are no longer a slave to sin. We don't live in slavery by going back and trying to make God love us by what we do.

Do you ever fall back into that? Do you ever kind of backslide into thinking, "Oh man! I have something important this week. I better get to church so I have God on my side when I have this big interview." Or "I have this doctor's appointment and I want it to go well, so I want God looking over my shoulder. I am going to go to church this week so

God will help me out.” Do you ever think that way? Do you ever think “I better start praying more because I have some tough stuff coming. I need to kind of win God over to my side.”

Here’s the amazing thing about our God. Our God knows all those foolish thoughts that we have, when we have them, even before we have them. He knows what we are like, and he sees that for what it is. He knows what we are. We are so tempted to backslide into trying to win his love by what we do. If I did that to you over and over, or if you did that to me over and over, you or I would get sick of it and wouldn’t want to put up with it anymore. That’s not how our God is. Our God is so loving and so patient and so kind that when we have even that glowing ember of faith in Jesus as our Savior, he doesn’t hold that sin against us of trying to manipulate him. In Christ, it is forgiven because we’ve been baptized into Christ. And through faith in Christ, those sins are completely taken away.

This is the amazing thing about our God... he is so patient and so loving and so kind, and he gives forgiveness fully and freely by his own actions and not by ours. What Paul is trying to start building into here and telling us is that if you’ve died to sin in that way, it no longer controls you completely, now you are connected to Christ. You are a slave to him. You are going to want to start doing the things God wants you to do, not because you have to, but because this is who you are now. Now you have this part of you that loves God and wants to serve God. When you are buried with Christ in baptism, now there is a part of you that loves him and really wants to do what he wants you to do. You don’t have to be told to do it. You want to do it. That’s what he is starting to do.

So if we die with Christ, we believe we will also live with him. We don’t have to be beaten with a two-by-four to serve our God, at least the new self in us. We want to do what God wants us to do. We want to serve him. We want to worship him. We want to say, “God, I love you for all the stuff you’ve done for me. I might do it with a voice that’s out of tune. I might not do it by singing the best, but Lord, I want to sing your praises. I want to honor you. I want to glorify you.” That might be how we do it in worship.

When we leave worship, we continue saying, “I want to honor and I want to glorify you. I want to be the best spouse I can be, the best child to my parents that I can be, not because if I don’t I won’t get a treat, but because it’s a way I show my love for God because now I’m connected to him. I want to be raised up to live a new life that isn’t out of coercion or isn’t out of force, but it’s simply because my God loves me and I love my God.”

That’s what we want. There’s a part of us where that’s what we are. The problem is when our Old Adam was buried, it no longer has control over us, but it certainly seemed to keep its head above water enough to still live in us, which it does. Paul is going to get to that next week. We are going to talk about that next week, the battle that goes on as the part of us that wants to do what God wants has to fight against the part of us that wants to do what we want.

But today just focus on this truth... Christ has set you free. When you were buried into his death at his baptism, everything his death meant for the world became yours personally. Christ has set you free so you get to live for him, so you want to live for him. Keep your eyes open, not just in church, during the week, for the ways that you live for the Lord. You do it as a friend to other people. You do it as a neighbor. You do it as a citizen. You do it in your job as an employee or an employer. You do it sitting on bleachers watching a ball game as someone who honors God and thanks God by how you conduct yourself and how you show love and support to those around you. The ways are limitless to live for God.

It isn't a burden. It's a joy when your eyes are focused on Christ. Your eyes are focused on Christ because you've been baptized into Christ.