

Last week, we discussed how baptism unites us to Christ's sufferings. We talked about how it isn't that Christ's suffering on the cross was somehow incomplete, and we need to "ease His load." Rather, baptism unites us to Christ, and we suffer by association. As Christians, we are to expect to be persecuted for our faith. But united to Christ through baptism, we share all the more abundantly in His comfort and we are even able to rejoice in the midst of suffering.

Now, at face value, it would appear as though this week we're jumping from the frying pan into the fire. Baptized into Christ's death? It would seem the only thing worse than suffering would be death. But the surprising fact is that a vast majority of humanity is dead—spiritually dead, that is. Our first part, 3. Humanity is dead according to our sinful flesh.

It may not seem like it, but we live among the walking dead. Those who live without faith that Jesus is Lord are spiritually dead. Paul wrote in our lesson today that those who don't have faith in Christ are dead in their trespasses and the uncircumcision of their flesh. They may appear to be more alive than us, especially those famous people who have the newest fashions, the perfect smile, and the fittest bodies. They may appear to be alive, but in reality, oftentimes they are spiritually dead on the inside. But despite this fact, whether it be a celebrity or your next door neighbor, we can be jealous of those who seem to have it all, yet "only" lack faith in Jesus.

Let us repent of that jealousy. Let us turn away from that sideways glance. Let us ask God to forgive our sins. Paul warned us, **"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."** Like I said last week, in baptism, we share in Christ's sufferings precisely because those who associate with Christ are to face persecution. There is the persecution of those who would like to make you feel insignificant because you don't chase after the same worldly things as they. But amidst suffering, we see Christ alongside us comforting us and bringing us joy in the midst of hardships. But sometimes, these earthly philosophies, these empty deceptions of sin, and these human traditions can be so enticing.

We are tempted to follow the worldly philosophy of chasing after wealth, but those who chase after wealth never have enough. We can be captivated by beauty and fitness, but those who do that always feel ugly or out of shape. Those who pursue knowledge always feel like they're one chapter behind. Those who follow the philosophy of hedonism, the pursuit of fun, are always afraid that somewhere someone else is having more fun and they're missing out. Whatever earthly pursuit you desire over and above God will capture you and hold you prisoner, as Paul warned.

These human philosophies, temptations, and traditions may claim to breathe life into us, but they will only hold us captive and eat us alive. Humanity may act like

they're alive when they pursue such things, but according to their sinful flesh, they're dead. You can't expect to find life among the dead. And among the walking dead of this world, there is only death.

What do you do with something that's dead? You bury it! Our second part, 2. In baptism, our sinful flesh was buried with Christ. How are we saved from this world filled with those who seem to be alive on the outside, but are dead on the inside? We ourselves are buried with Christ! Our sinful humanity was put to death on the cross with Christ. All our transgressions, all our sins, and all our longing for the comforts of this world— these all have been nailed to the cross of Christ. And through Christ's death, these sins have been erased as if they never existed.

How are we buried with Christ? Through baptism! We have been baptized into Christ's death. We have been buried alongside Christ. Our sinful flesh has been drowned in the waters of baptism, and through faith in Christ, our desires to chase after the philosophies, the sinful deceptions, and the manmade traditions of this world have died with Him. Our sinful lifestyle died with Christ on the day we were baptized.

All the manmade traditions and philosophies of this world claim that by following them, you will receive life. They claim life, but deliver death. But, oddly enough, being buried with Christ through baptism is the only way to truly receive life. In Christianity, the only way to live is to die! We aren't only joined to Christ's death in baptism, we're joined to his rising again. Paul wrote that you, “[have] been buried with [Christ] in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.” The title of today's sermon is “Baptized into Christ's Death,” but just as you cannot talk about Christ's crucifixion without mentioning His resurrection, so too, you cannot talk about dying with Christ in baptism without also talking about rising with Him. Our third and final point, 1. Through faith, we're raised to life in Christ.

Having been buried and resurrected with Christ in baptism, all that's left is Christ's richest blessings. Our sinful flesh has been crucified with Christ, and our new self has been raised with Him. And alive in Christ, we are filled with Him. Christ dwells in us and works through us to do great things. The same Jesus who healed the sick, raised the dead, and forgave sins unites Himself to us and lives with us in baptism. Also, Paul wrote that in Christ, “...**the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.**” What that means is that Christ is 100% God. Those who have seen Jesus have seen the Father. So the same Christ in whom the Father dwells now dwells in our bodies. Why return to the philosophies, deceptions of sin, and human traditions of this world which will only enslave us and kill us, when the God of the Heavens and the Earth has brought us life?

In fact, Paul concluded this section by saying, “[Christ] **disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.**” Hearers of this in Paul's day would have instantly thought of a Roman triumph march. Whenever a Roman general would win a foreign war, they would have a parade

through Rome. The captives, those who fought against Rome and lost, would be marched through the streets, disarmed and subject to humiliation from the crowds. This is the picture of Christ's victory through His death and resurrection, and in baptism, this too is our victory. So don't fall victim to the enticements of this world. Don't be captured by worldly philosophies, deceits, and traditions because these have already been captured by Christ, disarmed, and subjected to open shame.

Yes, there is still the temptation to try to seek after money, popularity, beauty, or knowledge. We might still struggle and fall prey to earthly ways of thinking and traditions of mankind. We still continue to sin. We will never fully die to our sinful flesh until the day we physically die. So it might be hard to believe that Christ has captured the captors, that Christ living in us does great things, and that our baptism has caused us to die and to rise again with Him. But we as Christians don't look at mere outward appearances. Through faith, we receive all these gifts of God.

Through faith in the powerful working of God, we see baptism not as mere water, but a dying and rising again with Christ. Through faith in the Bible's promises and warnings, we see the things of this world for what they are, that is, claiming to offer life, but actually delivering death. Through faith in the promises of baptism, we see that we are united to Christ and filled with Him who is fully God and fully man. Through the eyes of faith, we see our trespasses nailed to the cross with Christ erasing our debt of sin. We're forgiven for becoming captive to the worldly ways and lifestyles which promise life but only deliver death. We die to our sinful flesh, and we're raised up to live as sons and daughters of Christ, our king. Dying to sin means we confess those sins which we commit, and repent of them, receiving Christ's forgiveness.

So being “**...rooted and built up in him and established in the faith...**” we can share this message of life to a world filled with the walking dead. We have the good news that there is a better way than captivity to human philosophies, deceitfulness of sin, and the traditions of mankind. Chasing after these things will only lead to death, both physical death and spiritual death. But united to Christ through baptism, we have died to the trespasses of our sinful flesh, and Christ has raised us up to new life. As Christians, we have the privilege to share this message to a dying world desperately in need of Christ's forgiveness, life, and salvation.
BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST'S DEATH, WE ARE RAISED TO LIFE WITH HIM.
Amen.