

“Now is the Day of Salvation”

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Again, we gather this evening and continue our Advent journey focusing on the theme “We Begin with the End.” Two weeks ago, we heard the Lord say, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Last week, we hear the words of John the Baptist, the Advent prophet: “Even now, the axe is laid to the root of the trees.” Tonight, we hear St. Paul say, “Now is the day of salvation.”

“Now.” Salvation is not something the people of God are sitting around waiting for it to happen. Your salvation has already come. Your eternal life began at Baptism. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said to the crowd, “Baptism now saves you.” Baptism is both an end and a beginning. Your Old Adam drowns and dies. You are raised up in your new life in Christ. “If anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come,” as St. Paul says [II Cor. 5:17].

Then you hear the words of Jesus, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” [Jn. 11:25-26].

So, in Baptism, you are “in Christ” and are a “new creation.” And Christ is the resurrection and the life, and anyone who lives and believes in Him shall never die. Therefore, you are already experiencing eternal life. Your beginning – Baptism – brings you to the end. Your Old Adam drowns and dies in those waters on account of the Word of God. And you are raised to a new life in Christ.

The resurrection of the body and life everlasting is the ultimate goal. It is what we long for. It is the reason we decorate our church and our homes for Christmas. It is the reason we are so filled with joy at the celebration of the birth of our Lord.

Yet, we are called to examine our hearts and consciences, and we find nothing in us but sin and death, from which we are incapable of delivering ourselves. We live in the “now, but not yet of eternal life. Now is the day of salvation, but not yet do we experience the fullness of the life to come. Sin and guilt will remain in this world until Christ returns on the Last Day. Therefore, we rejoice in the grace of our Baptism, and we celebrate the coming of our Lord. He was born so that we can be reborn in water and the Word. He died, so that we will live.

He is the resurrection and the life. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. That child born in Bethlehem is the man hung on the cross outside of Jerusalem. He was born when the lambs were being born in Israel – when “the shepherds were out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night.” He was declared by John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan River to be “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” He is the Lamb of God crucified on the altar of the cross for the sin of us all.

We gather this evening to confess our sins and hear the words of forgiveness spoken in the Absolution. The forgiveness you receive, it is not something you have to wait around for. Now is the day of salvation. Your sins are forgiven now. You are a new person – right now.

“Baptism now saves you.” The promise of absolution now saves you. The Word of God and the sweet words of the Gospel now saves you. The broken body and shed blood of Christ our Lord now saves you. Now is the day of salvation. Amen.