

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 3
Saturday, June 12, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, June 13, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

“You are God’s Tabernacle”

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Earlier in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, he reminds us that we are but jars of clay—feeble, temporary, very breakable containers, yet in us is contained the most valuable treasure: the Gospel; “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ,” as Paul says (2 Cor. 4:6).

In today’s Epistle lesson St. Paul stays with the same theme but uses different imagery. Our earthly life is like a tent built by human hands. Like a tent – sometimes called a tabernacle, our bodies are just a temporary dwelling place. The life we live and all the things that we spend so much time struggling to obtain or achieve; these things will all pass away. The earthly home of our body is like a tent. Only when God calls us to our eternal home in heaven will we have anything that will last or have any permanence.

Paul continues to use imagery in drawing distinctions between earth and heaven; sin and grace; death and life. In our sinful temporary existence, we long to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.

As we heard last week, when Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, after they had sinned; what did they do? They hid from God because they were ashamed of their nakedness. The guilt and shame of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God was revealed to them in the shame of their nakedness. Because of their sin, they could no longer stand before God or each other in the way that God had intended in the beginning. Their sin caused them to feel Satan's accusations. They were naked and exposed. Guilt overwhelmed them. They needed to be clothed. So they wove for themselves clothing made of fig leaves to cover themselves, but they still hid from God because no fig leaf was going to cover them in any meaningful sense.

God confronts them concerning their sin and how they have brought judgment upon themselves and even death. Yet in His mercy, God offers them much more than fig leaves to cover the shame of their sin. The promise given them is the promise of a Savior. Sin and guilt would be covered. Satan and death would be defeated.

If we try to make it through this life without Christ who has taken away the guilt of our sin, on the Last Day, we will stand before God unclothed, stripped naked with all of our guilt and shame completely exposed. There is nothing we can hide from God.

But something about you has changed. As we heard two weeks ago in our Gospel reading, you have been “born again.” Tomorrow morning/ this morning Evie and Arlo will be /have been/ baptized (born again). What a great day this is in God’s family. As God’s adopted children through Baptism, you have the sure promise that so long as you remain in your Baptismal faith, you will always be clothed in Christ’s righteousness.

The clothing you wear that covers your sin, that covers your shame and nakedness before God, is the righteousness of Christ. You might say that it is your permanent baptismal garment that God has given to you. It is the only appropriate clothing to wear in the presence of God, and it is far more comfortable and covers far more completely than the fig leaf clothing of Adam and Eve.

This is why Scripture says that when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ we will receive our reward according to what we have done while in our earthly bodies, either good or bad. We confessed that two weeks ago in the Athanasian Creed. We all sin and fall short of what God demands. We are all worthy of the wrath of God as we appear before that judgment seat. And for those who do not live by faith, they will receive what is due them for the things done while in the body.

But for God's faithful, being clothed in that garment of righteousness, God only sees the good you have done. The bad is forgiven and is remembered no more. That is the promise found in your Baptism.

As Paul says, you are but jars of clay: feeble, temporary, easily breakable, yet in you is contained this most valuable treasure. In you is the Word of God – the joy of salvation in the Gospel. In you is the Holy Spirit Himself. He has made you His dwelling place. You are His tabernacle.

You carry this most precious treasure with you as we dwell in this earthly tent. And it is this treasure that ensures that when this earthly tent is destroyed, God will bring you to your eternal heavenly home. Of this you can be completely confident – your guilt and shame has been washed away in the waters of Baptism and you will remain clothed in Christ's righteousness within God's church on earth, and before the judgment seat, and for all eternity in the heavenly dwelling.

Sin and guilt have been covered by Christ. Do not desire to hide like Adam and Eve. Confess your sin in the confidence that the Absolution is spoken to you. And in the confidence of your Baptism, know that you are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Amen.