

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 4
Saturday, June 19, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, June 20, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

“Now is the Day of Salvation”

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

We often talk about how the presence of the Holy Spirit and your connection to Christ and His church is not simply all about what happens to us after we die – as if this life has no meaning. Again, there is nothing more important than the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. It is the ultimate goal, and it is the reason Christ came into this world. As Paul says, “If there is no resurrection of the dead, then we are to be pitied above all men,” because we will have wasted our life.

And the world around us points its finger at you and especially at me and says, “Why are you wasting your life on a God you have never seen and a God who lets bad things happen?” When you suffer through Paul’s laundry list of trouble “afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, riots, sleepless nights,” when you find yourself in the midst of these things because this sinful world is against you and Satan will likely never leave you alone, this does not change the fact that, as Paul says, “now is the favorable time, now is the day of salvation.”

Now is the favorable time because, even when we have nothing (in the eyes of the world), we possess everything because of Christ. The reality is that

the laundry list of “afflictions, hardships, calamities, etc.” is what we deserve. As a child of Adam, we deserve to die alone and unknown – and suffer an eternity in hell. We confess every week that we are poor, miserable sinners – not always with those words, but certainly with that sentiment. But now is the favorable time. Now is the day of salvation. That is the promise found in the Absolution.

We will still die as a result of the wrath of God justifiably punishing us for our sins. Present and eternal death is what we deserve – and we confess that. God had to send His Son to provide freedom from eternal death by suffering the temporal death on the cross – the death we deserved. Here on Father’s Day, it is a good time to ponder the length that our Father in heaven went to secure the safety of all of His adopted children.

Because of the faith created in our Baptism and nurtured in the receiving of God’s Word – faith in Christ’s death on the cross that swallowed up and defeated sin and death for all mankind, now because of this, we have no reason to fear. The resurrection of the body and life everlasting is your future. Forgiveness of all of your sin and new life in Christ is your present – the favorable time is now. The day of salvation is now. In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

You are forgiven and alive in Christ now. However, our mortal bodies carry death with it wherever we go, because we carry our sinful nature with us. Many

people today are like Job who was frustrated with God, among other things, because of the speed in which He carries out His judgment upon sinful man. No matter how old a person is when they die, we believe that they die too fast, and we are frustrated that we can do nothing to defer or hold back death. As the Roman orator Cicero said: “No one is so old as not to hope that he will live yet another year” [LW 13:100].

Our human nature continually hopes for longer life. Luther says: “This is the reason why everyone organizes his plans and projects as though he were going to live forever” [LW 13:100]. People try to transform their earthly life into an eternal life, even though all the while death is our nearest neighbor.

I think about my friend Rev. Peter Maganda. At Christmas in 2019, his brother-in-law Waihda died of a mysterious illness and left behind a wife and five children. Two weeks ago, one of Waihda’s seven-year-old twin daughters died of Malaria. Two months ago, Peter’s sister died giving birth to twins – and the two of them also died.

We live in a world of afflictions, hardships, and calamities. What we need to do is to learn to view our life in the way that God does. Methuselah lived for nearly 1000 years. Many people would say: “God must have really liked him.” But St. Peter tells us that “with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day” [2 Pt. 3:8] We are going to talk about this in Bible class tomorrow/today. The number of days that you live on this earth is not the

indicator of how much God likes you. In fact, in many cases, God shows mercy to those He loves by decreasing their number of days on this earth.

Because of the guilt of sin brought into the world by Adam, Adam's children are destined for a shortened life of afflictions, hardships, and calamities on earth followed by an eternity in Hell. Only through the mercy and sacrifice of Christ on our behalf do we have any hope for life or salvation. Our life on earth may still be short and wretched – filled with afflictions, hardships, calamities – although, if we actually look around, we see the hand of God providing for all of our needs of body and life. Even more so, if we actually look around and listen here today, we see how God is providing all that we need for this life and the life to come. The death of this body will be our last taste of death. Through Christ, we have life everlasting.

Our relationship with God is a matter of life and death. More specifically, it is a matter of life or death. God has set you on the road to life. Death no longer has mastery over you. Even though our days are limited on this earth and often filled with afflictions, hardships, and calamities, we look to God and say, "Praise be to God – Thy will be done" because living under the grace of our Baptism, living within the shelter of Christ's church, hearing the words of Absolution, participating in the broken body and shed blood of the Son of God, "now is the favorable time; now is the day of salvation." Amen.