

May God’s grace, mercy, and peace be yours this day in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen. The title for today’s sermon is “Original Sin”, and is based on the Old Testament reading; Genesis chapter three. Let us pray... . Amen.

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. There has been a transition from the season of Epiphany when the focus was on Jesus in the flesh, but more than that, how Jesus demonstrated that He was also God. But now in the season of Lent, we reflect on why Christ Jesus, God in the flesh, had to come. Lent is a more somber time in the Church Year as we walk with Jesus on His journey to Jerusalem, culminating in His death on the cross. Lent points to Good Friday when Jesus completed His earthly ministry and having carried all our sins in His life, there on Calvary nailed our sins along with the sins of the world on that wooden cross, He shed His blood, and our Saviour died to pay for every sin ever committed or that ever will be committed. This is the Good News, this is the glorious account of Christ earning for our salvation by dying in our place. This is the Good News message of the Gospel and we hear it often, but what did Jesus really die for? What is sin? What is this thing called ‘sin’ which the Bible, God’s inspired Word, talks about so often. God uses the word ‘sin’ over 441 times, and if other words with ‘sin’ in them, like sinful, the total number of times God inspired the writers to write it is 763 times in 655 verses (OT 519 in 447 verses, NT 243 in 207 verses, Gospels 69 in 66 verses). Sin is often discussed in the Bible.

But really, what is ‘sin’? What is the root of all sin? Hasn’t it always existed? Isn’t sin just bad choices, bad decision, falling for temptation, or, is there more to what sin is? Now, people have been debating for a very long time over what sin is, what sin is not, and where sin originated. Well, the fact that sin exists and the question as to how sin originated have been some of the greatest questions people have pondered. Philosophers have tried to deal with it for millenias. But if God; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and His creation of all things as “**very good**”(Genesis 1:31) is taken out of the equation, then one cannot truly discover the awful character of sin and its origin.

“Now some try to dismiss the reality of sin or to blame the weakness or frailty of man for sin, but that doesn’t quite explain it. Others have tried to explain sin in that there has always been both good and evil, but again, this fails to explain the terrible abomination that sin is. Both explanations also clearly ignore God’s Word in Scripture”(Walther: Law and Gospel, p.324) and both are completely wrong.

But the reality is sin does exist and it has for some time.

In the beginning, before chapter three in Genesis, God created all things in heaven and on earth and He created them without sin. God finished most every day of creation by saying “it was good”, and then on the 6th day and final day of creation, when everything that was to be created was created, God called all of creation “very good.” God created Adam and Eve perfectly good before they did anything. Their goodness was not based on what they did but on whose they were. God declared them good apart from works because that was how God made them; He spoke them into being. They were crafted by God’s voice, breathed into with His life, and called the identity of His own image. Their goodness was first God’s identification of them as good. All the other good that they would ever do, even in a perfect world—the good of loving

each other, being fruitful, and caring for God’s perfect creation—all of this flowed from that original, passively received goodness.(Fisk, 7 rules, 239-40)

In the beginning, everything God created was perfect: there was no suffering, no disease, no death, because there was no sin. But then something changed. God didn’t change nor did God instigate it; rather man changed.

Now, it wasn’t that Adam and Eve ate some fruit that was off-limits. It was that they believed that by eating the fruit that they themselves would become the source of their own newer, better goodness. The serpent told them they “would be like God.” It is as if the serpent said “you will be good apart from God. By knowing good and evil, you will identify yourself as the good you identify yourself to be.

And just like that they destroyed the goodness they were created in. They set themselves us against God and separated themselves from Him. They rejected God at His Word. By thinking God was holding out, or holding back, on them, they turned away from God. God’s Word was clear along with the consequences for abandoning Him: You Will Die!

Now, it was NOT God who tempted Adam and Eve. James records, “**Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.** ¹⁴ **But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.** ¹⁵ **Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.**”(James 1:13-15) Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They sinned. Sin separated Adam and Eve from the presence of God. The consequence for their sin was death and they were sent out of the garden.

Yet, that is not all Adam’s sin did. Sin came into God’s perfect creation and corrupted and condemned all of creation. Sin also brought suffering, disease, and, as God had declared, sin brought death into God’s perfect creation. “**The wages of sin are death**”(Romans 6:23a). What we earn for our sins is only death; eternal separation from God. Now, Adam and Eve did not immediately die after sinning against God. Instead animals started to die in their place and because of Adam and Eve’s sin. Adam gave the name Eve to the woman for “she was the mother of all living.”(Genesis 3:20) However, for their part in it, God clothed Adam and Eve in animal skins. “*Here Adam and Eve are dressed in garments by the Lord God Himself. Whenever they looked at their garments, these skins were to serve as a reminder to them to give thought to their wretched fall from supreme happiness into the utmost misfortune and trouble. Thus they were to be constantly afraid of sinning, to repent continually, and to sigh for the forgiveness of sins through the promised Seed. This is also why He clothed them, not in foliage or in cotton but in the skins of slain animals, for a sign that they are mortal and that they are living in certain death.*

Therefore just as the name Eve is a joyous omen of life, so these skins, as are our clothes, they are a reminder not only of past and future sin, but also of their present misfortunes, which their sins deserve.”(AE 1, 221)

Here is the root of Original Sin. This was the Fall that in turn infected all people, including you and me. Paul explains it saying: “**Therefore, just as sin came into the world**

through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned"(Romans 5:12). "The result is since the fall of Adam, all who are naturally born are born with sin(Ps 51:5), that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with the inclination to sin. Original Sin damns and brings eternal death on those who are not born anew through Baptism and the Holy Spirit(John 3:5)."(AC II)

Original sin is the total corruption of our whole human nature that we have inherited from Adam through our parents. The psalmist, David, clearly explains "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."(Ps 51:5). The act of procreation in marriage is not sinful, but at conception all inherit Original Sin. The righteousness Adam and Eve had is destroyed and gone. All we have is what we have inherited from our parents, which from Adam is death.

The root of all evil is sin. The root of all suffering and disease is sin. To deny this is to deny God's clear word of Scripture. This is the seriousness of sin. It is not child's play, nor is it inconsequential. The consequence of any sin is death. Any sin in God's eyes is to be punished by death.

Yet, "The more serious matter is that even within Christendom there are many who do not know what sin is. Some claim that people are naturally good and only become evil and sinful through the environment they grow up in, through bad upbringing, or falling for enticements which they don't have the strength to resist. Others claim that sinning is in no way worse than eating when you are hungry or drinking when you are thirsty; it is merely satisfying a natural craving. Some have gone so far as to say that sin has been the necessary means by which people have developed their self-conscience.

Yet, this blindness concerning sin is the chief cause of the almost universal rejection of the Gospel in our time. People who fail to recognize the horrible nature of sin will decline to accept the sacrificial death of the Son of God, namely Jesus Christ, for the reconciliation and redemption of this world of sinners; for they consider it utterly unnecessary and regard the story of the Gospel as a miserable fable."(Walther: Law and Gospel, p.324)

But as seen in the reading today, sin is real. The consequences are extremely severe. Adam and Eve died because they sinned, not as God intended but as the consequence for their actions. Sin is much more than just bad choices; Sin is an offence directly against God Himself and His holiness. There is no such thing as a smaller or less serious sin: sin is sin. It is either black or white with God and His Law; there is no grey area. James tells us, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it."(James 2:10) Break even what people consider the smallest of God's Law and you will be held as accountable as if you broke all of it. On top of that, Paul tells the Romans, and by extension us, "For the wages of sin is death"(Rom 6:23a). What we deserve for our sins, any and all of them, is death, eternal separation from God.

But going back in the Garden of Eden, before Adam and Eve were sent out by God for their sinfulness, God gave them the promise of a Saviour. He proclaimed how through the offspring of woman, through the seed of the woman would come One who would crush the head

of the serpent, One who would destroy the power of the devil, One who redeem Adam and Eve and all their descendants from the power of sin, devil, and the death: Christ Jesus our Lord. Adam and Eve had this promise to look forward to.

Here in today's Gospel reading we heard of a new Adam who was also tempted by the devil, namely Jesus Christ. Jesus was out in the wilderness, fasted for forty days, and then was tempted by the devil. The devil tried to tempt Him but unlike Adam and Eve, Jesus did not succumb to the devil's temptation. Instead, Jesus held fast to God's Word. Jesus' victory there in the wilderness over Satan was only a small sign of Jesus' complete victory over the devil when Jesus would have His heel bruised on the cross, but where this seed of Eve would crush the devil. Yes Jesus did die, for all, for me, and for each of you. It is through Jesus' sacrifice, His death, that we have life in His name.

As we walk through these forty days of Lent, as we walk and get closer and closer to Good Friday, as the reality of Jesus' Cross becomes greater and greater before our eye, as we recognize the enormity of our sins and how they contributed to Jesus' suffering and death. Jesus died because He was carrying the world's sins, He was carrying my sins, and He was carrying each of your sins. As we approach closer to the cross we there see the phenomenal love He has for you and me. Jesus came knowing the cost to redeem us, the price needed to pay for all our sins and despite, He knew the punishment necessary. And that is why Jesus came. He carried each of you to the cross and nailed them to that wooden cross, He bled His own perfectly sinless blood to cover all your sins, and He died His sinless death so you would not die eternally. But that is also not where the Gospel ends. Jesus did not stay dead. On the Third Day Jesus rose from the dead to proclaim His victory over sin, death, and the devil. He rose to prove God's wrath over sin has been satisfied. Jesus rose to prove God has accepted His full payment for all sins, He has paid for world's sins, He has paid for all of my sins, and Jesus has paid for each and every one of your sins.

Here the righteousness of God is transferred; the death of God, Christ Jesus, for our life; His righteousness for our unrighteousness; His eternal life given to you.

And so, as we walk through these forty days of Lent let us reflect on the enormity of our sin and also the seriousness of our sin, but also on the gift of forgiveness and salvation we have received through Christ Jesus our Lord, the One promised to Eve, the One delivered on the cross, the One who rose from the dead: our Saviour who continues to come to us with His Word and Sacrament.

His is the peace which surpasses all understanding. Amen.

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