

Lent 1  
March 5, 2017

*“Death through Adam, Life through Christ”*

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## ROMANS 5:12-19

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¶<sup>2</sup> Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—<sup>13</sup> To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come. <sup>15</sup> But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! <sup>16</sup> Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. <sup>17</sup> For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ! <sup>18</sup> Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. <sup>19</sup> For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

There is an old saying, “One bad apple can ruin the whole bunch.” Is this really true? If you store some apples in a cool place in your garage, can one rotten apple lead the other apples to rot? Yes, it can. When they are rotting, apples release a gas called ethylene that causes other apples to rot.

Before us this morning we have the well known words of Romans 5 that tell us how a bad apple by the name of Adam has caused the rot and decay of sin to come into the whole human race. When Adam sinned against God he then passed this sin down his children, his children passed sin down to their children. I have passed it down to my children. David said in Psalm 51, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

Our Lutheran Confessions, specifically the *Formula of Concord*, has this to say about original sin. “We believe, teach and confess that original sin is not a slight corruption of human nature, but that it is so deep a corruption that nothing sound or uncorrupted has survived in man’s body or soul.” The only hope for overcoming this corruption inherited from Adam lies in the perfect life that Jesus lived for us, and the perfect sacrifice he offered to pay for our sin. With the help of the Holy Spirit we want to speak to you on this theme: “Death through Adam, Life through Christ.”

### The origin of sin

How did sin come into the world. “Therefore just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all have sinned.” Here it says clearly sin entered the world through one man. We heard how sin came into the world through the first lesson from Genesis chapter 3. Eve listen to the devil who suggested she could be like God if she ate from the forbidden fruit. She took some of the fruit, ate it and gave it to her husband.

Their eyes were opened to see evil for the first time. When Adam was confronted by God for his disobedience, he immediately blames his wife Eve and God with the words, "The woman you put her with me-she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

The effects of sin were obvious in their behavior toward each other, obvious in their fear of God. Obvious in the ground that produced thorns and thistles. Aches and pains were there where they were not there before. Adam and Eve also passed this sin on to their children. It says in Genesis 5 that Adam had a "son in his own likeness, in his own image, and he named him Seth." Adam gave birth to children in his own likeness. They not only had his physical features but they carried with them the rot and decay of sin that Adam had messed up Adam's life.

Sin was certainly present in the lives of these people who lived before the ten commandments were given to Moses. Romans 5:13 says "For before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law." Even though God's law, the ten commandments had not yet been given to Moses on Mount Sinai, you could see sin the lives of Adam and Eve and their children. Think of how evil their first born son was. When Cain became inflamed with anger against his brother Abel, the Lord warned him that sin was crouching at his door. Did Cain listen to the Lord? No he let his anger get the best of him and he killed his brother Abel. And when the Lord asked him "Where is your brother Abel?" he callously said, "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" Adam saw the effects of his sin passed down to his children, and his grandchildren. He lived to be 930 years old and saw 28 generations of kids just as rotten in sin as he was.

Although Adam lived for 930 years and Methuselah lived 969 years, eventually they all died. Verse 14 of our text says, "Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come." All the people that came after Adam died because they inherited Adam's sin and they sinned personally in their lives. Death reigned in their lives. Death dominated their thinking just as it does our thinking of today. Get as much for yourself before you die even if it means stepping over other people to get it. Even if they do not have the command that was given to Adam or the ten commandments given to Moses, they do what they wanted to do because their lives are controlled by the reality that some day they must die.

Have you ever read the genealogy of the people in Genesis 5 that lived long lives? What does it say after each name? "Altogether Adam lived 930 years, and then he died." "Altogether, Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died." A man brought his friend to church for the first time. The pastor had started a series of sermons on the book of Genesis. That day he read from Genesis 5 with all the names and the long lives and the words after each name, "and he died." The man thought, "Why does he have to listen to this reading? That will certainly turn him off." It did not work that way. He was struck by the words, "And he died." He came back to hear more because he was worried about dying and he wanted the peace his friend had.

All of us sitting here this morning will someday have to face death. Because of Adam and the consequences I find no hope for escaping the judgment to come in myself or other people. However, I have everything in Christ Jesus my Savior. Adam is the source of my sin and Jesus is the source of my escape from sin, my hope of salvation.

## **The origin of salvation**

"The gift is not like the trespass. For if many died by the trespass of one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by that grace overflow to the many." Many died by the sin of one man namely Adam. In fact all humanity died. But God's grace and the gift that came by that grace overflows to the many! There is a powerful illustration in that Greek word that is used

here to describe how God's grace and his gift of salvation overflows to many. The word has the thought of something flowing up from the ground and then flowing all over the place. Imagine a car crashing into a fire hydrant and water flowing all over the place. The blood of Jesus that flows from the cross has the power to take care of every sin that has been committed by people made rotten through Adam's fall.

Let me expand on this with another illustration. Imagine there is a major oil spill in the Santa Barbara Channel similar to what happened in 1969. Everything is covered in oil. But then a person steps forward with something he has developed to totally removed the problem of the oil. He releases some microbes in the ocean that multiply rapidly and feed on the oil. With weeks there is no oil left on the rocks or sands or even the birds. It is completely removed and absorbed and eaten up.

God's gift of grace has provided a cure for the toxic sin that infects our lives. That source and that cure is found in Jesus. He is the single source of our salvation just as Adam was the single source of our sin and damnation. In the Revelation chapter 7 countless people all of over the world stand before the throne of God and the Lamb joyfully singing, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb."

Because Jesus is the singular source of our salvation we have the daily joy of knowing we are justified or declared not guilty. "Again the gift of God is not like the result of one man's sin; the judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification." What did Adam bring into my life? He brought the pronouncement that I am guilty or condemned before God. What did Jesus bring into my life? He brought the verdict of not guilty. When he died, he cried out, "It is finished!" The Father raised him to life for my justification to pronounce me not guilty.

What did Adam bring into my life? He brought death. What did Jesus bring? He brought life. "For if by the trespass of the he one man, death reigned through the one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provided of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ." Adam's sin spreads this dark gloom over my life that says, "You have no hope. You are going to die." Through Jesus we receive the gift of God's grace and the gift of righteousness that put us into a position where we reign with Christ. The Revelation says we live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. Right now you live and reign with Christ because nothing in all creation will ever separate you from his love. People who die in Jesus go home to be with the Lord. They are now reigning with Christ. And someday when Jesus returns we will live and reign with him in the place he has prepared for us. That's our great hope that totally reverses the tragedy that came with Adam's fall.

I want to close this sermon today by having us take one final look at the contrast between Adam and Christ as presented to us in verses 18 and 19. "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so the result of one of act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man many will be made righteous."

One sin on the part of Adam introduced sin into the world and brought condemnation to all people. It pronounced the whole world "Guilty" before God. But it was through Jesus and his righteous life that God was able declare people not guilty and bring this declaration of not guilty to them. It was through the disobedience of Adam that the whole world became disobedient. Adam and Eve said yes to Satan when they were tempted. What do we see in Jesus? We see perfect obedience. He said "No!" to every temptation Satan placed before him. That perfect obedience is now your perfect obedience. Through Jesus you are made righteous because you have been declared to be

righteous. Instead of a rotten apple corrupted by the first rotten apple Adam, through Jesus you are pure and perfect and holy in God's eyes. You are justified. You are declared not guilty. You are now the apple of his eye. It sounds too good to be true, but it is true. Death came to you through Adam, but life is yours in Christ Jesus your Savior. Amen.