

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Second Sunday After Trinity, June 9, 2024

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns 358, 61: 3-4, 331, 392, 477:3

Lessons: 2 Samuel 11:26 – 12:15, 2 Corinthians 7: 8-10, Mark 1: 1-5.

Text: Acts 2: 37-39.

. Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

If someone told you that there were something you could do to live a long, healthy, happy life, you'd do it, wouldn't you?

Some of you are pretty much young enough that you are thinking that you have or surely will have everything you need to live a long, happy life. But if you start thinking about the problems of old age, you may wonder: How can I avoid the arthritis that my grandmother had? How can I avoid getting the same heart disease that my grandfather had? How can I avoid the cancer that my mother had? How can I avoid the diabetes that my father had?

Humans want to live long lives. Some humans will pay almost anything to live longer. People are even having their bodies frozen in hopes of preserving the body until they can come back to life when their disease has been conquered. No, I'm not making that up.

As an example of this, I'd like to read something I found about an organization called "the Cryonics Institute." This is a quotation from their internet web site: "The Cryonics Institute offers cryonic suspension services and information. As soon as possible after legal death, a member patient is prepared and cooled to a temperature where physical decay essentially stops, and is then maintained indefinitely in [a state of frozen-ness at an extremely low temperature.] When and if future medical technology allows, our member patients will be healed and revived, and awakened to extended life in youthful good health." (<http://www.cryonics.org/>) That's not just science fiction! Some companies freeze just the head of the dead person. The same company I just quoted advertises "We're first in number of whole-body patients." That means that people are even now having their bodies frozen in the moments after death. This particular company, not the only one offering this hope of coming back to life, or living a long life after a cure for one's particular disease is found, only charges a minimum fee of \$28,000 for this service.

So even now there are people who have placed their dead bodies into a state in which they hope they will come back to live longer lives.

Would you pay that much money to live longer? Obviously, there are people who are doing it.

But today God offers you the opportunity to live longer – and it won't cost you one penny. To hear about that opportunity today, let's look at

THE EFFECT OF PETER'S SERMON

1. ***"Brothers, what shall we do?"***
2. **What must YOU do to be saved?**

Peter's hearers on this first Pentecost day knew they were guilty of killing Jesus Christ. Peter had made that abundantly clear that they, the Jews, had sent this one, Jesus Christ, to death on the cross. And if they weren't personally present at Jesus' crucifixion, they knew they were from the tribe or race or people who had killed him. Are we any different? It is our tribe, our race, our people who killed him. We are part of the human race, all descended from Adam. Every one of that tribe is guilty of sin. Every one of that tribe is guilty of doing things that are sinful, and saying things that are sinful and thinking things that are sinful. That means all of us. And the

wages, the result of sin is death. Sin separates mankind from God. Eternal death separates us from God eternally. We cannot avoid earthly death. But we can, as Peter teaches by the inspiration of God, avoid the eternal death that we really all deserve.

And lest you start thinking that you aren't as bad as some people, remember that ***"whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."*** (James 2:10 KJV) ***"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."*** (James 2:10 NIV)

Peter had now made them aware of their sins. They had felt that pressure of their sins. Their sins pressed on them, and now they were asking: ***"Brothers, what shall we do?"***

Scripture says of those asking this question: ***"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'"***

Peter's preaching the Law of God and showing their sinfulness had its effect. And the Word of God then tells us: ***"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call.'"***

What shall they do? Repent!

Repentance is something which takes place in the heart. The word repentance comes from a Greek word meaning "change of mind." It is not just doing things differently, so that others can see what is going on, but repentance comes from the heart. In a narrow sense Scripture uses the word to mean sorrow and contrition over sin. In a broad sense in Scripture, "Repent" means to turn from sinful unbelief to faith in Jesus, to turn from self-righteousness to trust in Jesus Christ's redeeming work. In that broad sense, it includes repentance in the narrow sense as well as faith in Jesus Christ. Good works then follow as a fruit of this faith. In the broad sense, we often include a third point, fruits of faith, which follow contrition and faith. When scripture uses the word "repent" together with "faith" and "believe", it denotes sorrow and contrition over sin.

The word of God which Peter preached and the promise of forgiveness in baptism had the power to work such repentance. Peter preached both Law to show sin and Gospel to show what Jesus did about sin.

Mankind needs both: Law and Gospel. We have the summary of the law in the ten commandments. But will hanging the ten commandments in every classroom, in every jail, in every courthouse in the United States make people better, or give us everlasting life? We know it won't. It will serve only as a reminder of the rules that we must obey. For all men it will serve as a mirror to show their sinfulness, and, perhaps as some people hope, it will serve as a curb to prevent gross outbreaks of sin. But the commandments alone will not produce believers in Jesus Christ and lead to eternal life.

We have a reminder in our sermon text of the fact that baptism is a means of grace, that is, a means by which God gives us his undeserved saving grace and love. That forgiveness of sins, earned by Christ's perfect life and death, is given to sinners in baptism.

God's grace is also given to sinners when the word of God is preached.

Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is baptism on the basis of who Jesus is and what he has done. The means of grace are the gospel in Baptism, the gospel in the Lord's Supper, and the gospel in the word which is preached. So the means of grace is the Gospel. It is the same gospel in the sacraments and in the word. We could count them as the two means of grace or as one means of grace: the gospel in Word and the gospel in the sacraments, but it is the same means of grace.

The Augsburg Confession in Article XII correctly describes repentance: "Now, repentance consists properly of these two parts: One is contrition, that is, terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, and believes that, for Christ's sake, sins are forgiven, comforts the conscience, and delivers from its terrors. The good works are bound to follow, which are the fruit of repentance." Strictly speaking, then, conversion takes place the moment a person trusts in Christ for the remission or forgiveness of his sins. Sorrow over sin is a prerequisite of this faith, and good works follow this faith; good works are the fruit of this faith.

The Jews who first heard Peter's sermon rightly asked, "What must we do to be saved?"

We too, when our sins press hard upon us, and we are troubled by our wickedness, ask, "What must I do to be saved?" You have learned the answer, but must be reminded again and again:

Jesus Christ did it all. That is the Gospel. Believe! Believe this and it will be yours!

Peter's sermon had the effect that God desired: ***“When the people heard [Peter's sermon], they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins’”***.

Peter admonished them to repent. He admonished them to contrition and repentance. And he also talks about how we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: Peter talks about Baptism. ***“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’”*** (Acts 2:37–39, NIV84)

Do you remember what Baptism is and does? Listen as we review the familiar old truths in the words of the catechism our children are using:

WHAT DOES BAPTISM DO FOR US?

Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

What is God's promise?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Luther concludes his discussion of baptism by asking:

Fourth: WHAT DOES THIS BAPTIZING WITH WATER MEAN?

It means that our Old Adam with his evil deeds and desires should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die, and that day by day a new man should arise, as from the dead, to live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity now and forever.

Day by day, every day we must be reminded from the Word of God about our Baptism and what it does, whether it is from those bible passages we memorized and so easily forget, or whether it is from reading the Word of God daily and being reminded of the forgiveness of sins.

What about that gift of the Holy Ghost that Peter was talking about?

Can you think of any greater gift than the forgiveness of sins? If you think of that gift of the Holy Spirit, that God, through the forgiveness of sins gives you eternal life, without having to freeze your body or some such silly thing, then we must be impressed with the gift of the Holy Ghost. That gift of the Holy Ghost – the forgiveness of sins – comes to man through the Word of God. The Word of God is also the gift of the Holy Ghost. The forgiveness of sins is really far greater than such things as speaking in tongues, which are some of the gifts given even on that first Pentecost day. The speaking in foreign languages was so that believers in Christ could preach the Gospel to foreigners in their own languages. Surely, that was a remarkable gift, but nothing compared to the gift of eternal life through the forgiveness of sins!

Most of us don't hesitate to take advantage of free food.

In God's word, we have free food. You have the free and bountiful Word of God feeding your soul, assuring you daily of the forgiveness of your sins. That's why God's people gather here, to hear God's word, because they want to be reminded publicly every Sunday of the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. That forgiveness of sins is yours through the faith that the Holy Ghost first worked in you at your baptism, and through the faith that is fed every time you hear or read God's Word – the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What must we do to be saved?

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”
Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Amen.