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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 10, 2021
4th Midweek Lent

Responsive Reading: Psalm 73:21-26

Passion Reading: Peter's Denial

Hymns: 149; 143:1-5; 151:1,2,6,7; 551:1,2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: It Is All about Our Redemption

As we review Jesus' sufferings and death in our Lenten meditations, we are moving from scene to scene in our Passion readings. We began in the Upper Room where Jesus demonstrated His humility in washing the disciples' feet. He did this in response to an argument the disciples were having concerning which of the disciples was greatest! He there also revealed the disciple that was about to betray Him. We heard again how Jesus also instituted a new supper we call the Lord's Supper at the Last Passover Supper. Our readings then took us to Gethsemane, where we also were encouraged to watch and pray as we witnessed the Lord's anguish in the garden. We heard once again how Jesus went out to meet

His betrayer, and identified Himself for that angry mob, and asked that the disciples be allowed to go free. We followed to the judgment hall and heard the many false accusations of sin, accusations of sin that other people have done, but not Jesus, and how He was condemned as the Son of God. This evening we read of Peter's fall into sin as he denied three times even knowing Jesus. From there we will go to Pilate's palace, and hear again of scourging, and mockery and the crown of thorns, and finally Jesus' crucifixion.

Why would Jesus endure all this? It is as we professed in our confession of faith again this evening. **"He has redeemed me!"** It is ALL about our redemption. And so, we continue to consider redemption from what? This evening we consider that wonder of grace in Christ Jesus that --

THEME: He Saved Me from Death.

I. Death: It Is What We Deserve.

Our text begins with the simplest of truths that our sinful flesh seeks to deny. *"The wages of sin is death!"* (Romans 6:23a) That truth has been presented clearly by the Lord in His Word from the very beginning. The Lord God told Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden, and that in the day they ate of it, they would die! (Genesis 2:16-17) Disobedience is sin, and sin brings death! Paul reminded us of this truth and its pervasive nature earlier in this epistle to the Romans, *"Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."* (Romans 5:12)

Even though the truth is presented in the plainest of terms, "sin brings death," death came upon all men because all sin. We would like to believe, and most people convince themselves to believe that physical death just happens, it's part of life, and they won't be subject to eternal death in hell because they aren't *that* bad. The things they and we have done wrong are **bad**, sins that deserve death. We all fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) We have all broken God's law and defied the holy will of God for our own selfish purposes. Human rationalizations for why our sinful

conduct is not worthy of death are false and misleading. It is an exercise in self-deception! And we sin every day.

Death has come upon us all. It comes upon us just as it first came upon Adam and Eve; they died spiritually in the alienation of their souls and so their entire persons from God. They were subject to physical death, which incites fear in man, because it was **not** part of God's natural order of creation. Adam and Eve would eventually return to the dust from which they were taken. They were also deserving of eternal death. And all this has been passed down upon all men. All have sinned. And "*the wages of sin is death.*"

Ben Franklin was the one who said that there are only two things certain in this world; they are death and taxes. From man's perspective there is no avoiding death. But there is, and that is found in Christ Jesus!

II. The Gift of God is Life!

The wages of sin shall be paid out. Death will not simply disappear on its own. It must be vanquished. The price of death for sin had to be paid. The power of death over mankind had to be defeated. Life is not something we can earn or deserve. Life is the gift of God that comes to us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the epistle to the Hebrews we read: "*Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,* ¹⁵ *and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*" (Hebrews 2:14-15) The Son of God took upon Himself our flesh and blood that He might die the death we deserved. Through **His** death He redeemed **us** from death. By **His** death He released **us** from death. By His death and resurrection Jesus defeated death, and set us free from the fear of death, and the power of the grave.

Recall Jesus' words to Martha just weeks before His sufferings and death. He said, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.* ²⁶ *And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.*" (John 11:25-26) With these words

Jesus assures us of the truth of resurrection. We too shall rise again, for the grave cannot hold us. Death has lost its grip. He promised something more wonderful. Despite the reality of physical death looming before us, spiritual and eternal death are removed already through faith in Jesus as our Redeemer. Whoever lives and believes in Jesus, in the all-atoning merits of His sufferings and death and the reality of His resurrection, shall never die. We, who believe in Jesus, we have eternal life in His name. We have life now and we have that life forevermore. Jesus has saved me from death.

Again, a little later in this Epistle to the Romans, we are assured of this truth: *“If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.* (Romans 8:11) The Holy Spirit has entered our hearts through the gospel. He has called us to faith in Christ Jesus. The grave cannot and shall hold us. We have life in Jesus’ name! Our mortal bodies shall put on immortality!

In 1 Corinthians we are assured of the Jesus’ power over death with these words: *“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Corinthians 15:56-57)

It is **all** about redemption, **OUR** redemption! Jesus paid for our sin, and the sting of death has been removed. Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of the law both in His perfect fulfillment of the law in His life, and in satisfying our indebtedness to the law by His death. God has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Thanks be to God!

“Christ, the Life of all the living,
Christ, the Death of death, our foe,
Who, Thyself for me once giving
To the darkest depths of woe,—
Thro’ Thy suff’rings, death, and merit
I eternal life inherit:
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

(The Lutheran Hymnal 151:1)

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)