

“NAILING OUR SINS TO THE CROSS.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for the Sermon: Isaiah 53:5-6; Colossians 2:13-15

Introduction.

The season of Lent is a penitential season of preparation that leads up to Resurrection Sunday. This Lent we have studied six of the so called seven serious sins. The snow day in February pushed anger to next week. This serious look at our sin should heighten for us our joy on this Sunday when we see what God has done to forgive us all our sins.

Today truly is a day for rejoicing. The sting of death is sin and the wages of sin is death, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. As our deeper look at sin gives us more of an appreciation of this day, so also a deeper look at our victory will give us a deeper appreciation of this day.

Paul paints a vivid picture using *four scenes* to show us what Christ has done for us. They show us four blessings that are ours because of Christ, that are ours as Christians. *Two internal blessings and two external blessings.*

Two internal blessings Jesus does for us, vs. 13.

Christ made we who were dead in our trespasses alive again.

Paul's first scene or picture is of a dead man walking. That phrase is used of men on death row, who have been convicted under the law and are under the sentence of death, who is powerless to save himself.

We were dead. Though we thought we were alive, we were really dead. In Adam we all rebelled against God, we ate the fruit of the tree that God said if we ate we would die. To be in sin is to be dead. We are dead men walking.

When we are born we are given a certificate of live birth. We think to have natural life is to be alive. But in sin we have no spiritual life, we are morally impotent, powerless, dead. I know it's kind of a morbid thought, but when we are born we should also be given a certificate of spiritual death.

You have heard Jesus' words, "What does it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul?" You understand the meaning behind that, right? You can have this life and all that is in it, but if you don't have spiritual life it is worthless, pointless.

That's why Jesus also said don't fear those who can kill the body but not the soul, fear those who can destroy both your soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).

This is why I say the greatest threat facing our planet is not greenhouse gases or climate change or carbon foot print, or coal or oil, or terrorists bombs or the mother of all bombs, or North Korea, Syria or Russia, or cancer or disease. All of those things can only touch our bodies.

The greatest threat to this planet is the just wrath of a Holy God who will satisfy the demands of justice with a final judgment. Don't fear anything that can just be done to the body, fear what can be done to the soul.

This is why Christ's victory over all the threats to our soul is such a huge deal, why the resurrection is the most important event in human history. He came to save our souls.

In Christ we who were dead, are made alive. Christ by His resurrection, has raised us from the dead. On Resurrection Sunday we don't just celebrate Christ's resurrection, but ours as well.

Christ has set us free from the fear of death. Christians are the freest people on this planet. A Christian in North Korea is freer than a non-Christian in America.

Christ died to make us alive, in Christ we are no longer dead men walking.

Christ made we who were sinners forgiven of all our sin.

The next scene Paul paints is of pardoned sinners, the internal reality of our forgiveness.

Under the law we have the death penalty because of our sin. As any criminal can tell you, if you take away his sentence, you take away the penalty. If you take away what has him locked up, he is no longer in bondage, but is a free man. He has a new lease on life.

Satan's only power over us is unforgiven sin. Satan stands before God and says, "See this sin, it deserves the death penalty." He is always condemning us and bringing charges against us. Unforgiven sin is the only thing that can kill us, that can send us to hell. But when Christ took our sin onto Himself, He took away the only weapon Satan had against us.

The one thing that stands between us and God and separates us from Him and eternal life is our sin. But Christ has removed the barrier, the dividing wall, the hostility that stands between us.

Christ has taken away our slavery to sin, we are no longer in bondage. What a precious gift God has given us in not holding our sins against us, but holding out forgiveness through faith in Jesus.

Acts 10:43 Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.

It's rich grace because it is unmerited, undeserved, cannot be bought or earned. In Christ the dead are raised to life. In Christ the guilty are pardoned. These two internal blessings are possible and true because of two external blessings also accomplished on the cross.

Two external blessings Jesus does for us, vss. 14-15.

Christ canceled the record of our debt with its legal demands by nailing it to the cross.

Paul's next picture is of a handwritten ledger of indebtedness, a signed IOU.

Anyone with a mortgage or a car loan or a student loan or any kind of loan knows what this looks like. It is a legal acknowledgement of indebtedness.

What is our record of debt and what are the legal demands?

The record of our debt is all our great and many sins and the legal demand is that they must be paid in full and the wages of sin is death.

This record stands against us. It's not just an accusation of guilt, it's a threat of penalty because of our inability to pay. This record is a real and serious threat to us.

The righteous demands of the law are a threat to us because none of us can keep it. The holy standard written on our hearts condemns us. All humanity is in debt to God and their consciences convict them that this is true. When their debt is revealed at the judgment they will be without excuse, they will admit it is all true.

I picture a legal pad ledger, a balance sheet with assets and liabilities. On the one side is all our sin, all our bad deeds, all our spiritual debts.

What's on the other side? Our good deeds? What good deeds? Do we think if we have enough of them, they will outweigh the bad? Aren't even our good deeds defective? What does Scripture say?

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;

Isaiah 64:6 All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

Romans 3:10-12 “None is righteous, no, not one ... 12 ... no one does good, not even one.”

So even the thoughts, words and deeds on the good side of the ledger end up on the bad side.

But to think in these terms completely misses how God saves us. It is complete folly to put our hope in good deeds. God doesn't save us based on our good deeds outweighing the bad. God has another way of saving us. His way is to take the whole ledger, all our debt and nailing it to the cross of Christ. There is no hope in deeds, deeds are debt.

Christ nailed to the cross our debt, our curse, our sins and all the punishments due to us, and the bondage of the law and everything that binds our conscience.

To say it another way, Christ became the curse, so when Christ was nailed to the cross, the curse was nailed to the cross. It's validity was completely canceled by the death of Christ.

“There is no salvation by balancing the records. There is only salvation by canceling the records. The record ... must be blotted out – not balanced” (John Piper).

The word *cancelled* is especially strong, it means wiped out, completely obliterated. This is the word you would use if you dropped the mother of all bombs on our sin.

At the great day of judgment the books will be opened and all our sins exposed, our lust, envy, anger, sloth, gluttony, greed, and pride. Every idol word and thought, nothing will be over looked.

But who is sitting next to the Judge? The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, is seated on the right hand of the Father in glory and He stands up for us. If by faith we have made Jesus our Savior, our mediator, our advocate with the Father, then nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Martin Luther was known to have some vivid dreams. In one he found himself being attacked by Satan. The devil unrolled a long scroll containing a list of Luther's sins in his own handwriting, and held it before him. “Did you write this?” Luther had to confess yes. Scroll after scroll was unrolled and the same confession wrung from Luther. Finally the Evil One finished humiliating Luther and was about to leave him in his lowest misery.

Then suddenly it came to Luther in the dream and he said: “It's true, every word of it, but write across it all, ‘The blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanses us from all sins.’”

In Christ the record of all our debts is completely cancelled.

Christ disarmed the rulers and authorities putting them to shame by triumphing over them.

Paul's final picture is of a victorious Roman general leading his vanquished and captive prisoners in a humiliating procession through the streets of Rome.

The curse of the law of God was not the only thing against us. Also against us was the power of Satan. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by His blood. Christ rescued us from Satan's power by His own greater power.

Mark 3:27 But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

By His own death and resurrection Christ ***defanged*** the devil, He neutered him, made him impotent and powerless. And not just Satan, but his entire army, every last one of the demons and devils, the fallen angels. More than ***disarm*** them, Christ stripped them. This is the humiliation of being left naked. What Christ experienced in His crucifixion, He did to them.

Remember how I said sinners go about in this life thinking they are alive but the spiritual reality is they are really dead. Well the same is true of Satan. He goes around in this life thinking he is strong and powerful, and he is, he does a lot of harm. But the spiritual reality is he is as good as dead, a dead Satan walking.

Jesus delivered the mortal blow from the cross. Satan has been put to ***public shame*** as a fraud. He is a conquered enemy. God has forever exposed to the entire universe the utter helplessness of Satan and all the principalities and powers allied against God.

Imagine the scene in hell on Good Friday night. Death calls down to Satan (probably used the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 that has smoke and fire). "Satan, we've won, we have defeated Him, He's dead and we're bringing Him down." "What? Really? Death, are you sure?" "Yes, I'm sure, I know death and I know when someone is dead, He's dead." "Really dead? Did you check His pulse?" "Yes, I checked His pulse, He's deader than a door nail. We have Him and we're bringing Him down."

Oh, how hell must have celebrated on Saturday. To have the Son of God in their grasp was better than anything they could have hoped or imagined. But then imagine the scene in hell early Sunday morning. Death has to call Satan with the worst news possible. "Satan, no one has ever done this before, He has escaped." "What how is that possible, you said He was dead." "I know, and Satan, that's not the worst of it, it's worse than you think, He took the keys."

If we lose our keys, how do we feel? Vulnerable, insecure, threatened. We quickly get all our locks changed, get things rekeyed.

Death is left with no keys. It's not much of a prison if someone on the outside has the keys. Christ has taken away Death's power and authority. We have Jesus' own words,

Revelation 1:17-19 "Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

"I have the keys. I have disarmed them and put them to utter shame."

Implications and Application.

What a powerful description of what has been done for us on the cross.

In Christ we who were dead are made alive, our souls resurrected from death to life.

In Christ we who were sinners have our sins vanquished and forgiven.

In Christ we who had an unpayable debt, have had our debt cancelled.

In Christ we who were in complete bondage to fear, death, sin, and Satan are alive and free.

If you are spiritually dead, come to Christ to be made alive.

If you are overwhelm by the load of guilt of you sin, come to Christ to have that load removed.

If you are living in fear, anxiety, bondage, defeat, depression, hopelessness, come to Christ for your peace and joy.

Whatever situation you are facing right now, whatever trial or tribulation, know that God has the keys, the power, the authority, the control, and He controls the outcome, and for those who know Him and love Him and trust Him, He will cause all things to work for the very best good.

God's wrath is removed, the curse is gone, the debt is paid, Satan is destroyed. Christ is risen and enthroned. Christ has done it all, there is nothing more left undone.

I Corinthians 15:54-57 "Death is swallowed up in victory."

55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Holy Father, you have destroyed the last enemy death, you have defeated Satan, you have vanquished hell, you have raised to life your Son whom you crucified. Enable us, to live and to love in the light and truth and promise of the resurrection. Reorder and reorient our lives around this one center, around this one central truth, the reality of Jesus' final and decisive triumph over death. Make this reality real and practical in all our daily lives, in all our daily interactions and relationships, to the glory of Jesus Christ, in whose mighty name we pray, Amen.