

"Day by Day" -- Acts 2:36-47

The Sermon for the Baptism of
Turner Joseph Webb
14 April Anno Domini 2002

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Grace, mercy and peace to you in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Dear Baptized,

The first reading for this Sunday is the sermon text. Please listen to the last sentence of Acts 2:36-47 under the theme of ...

"Day by Day"

"And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

Day by day, each day and daily the event takes place. One here. Six in Kansas. One there. Twins in August. One near. Seven in Iowa. One far off. Triplets in France. Even so, the reality that it is so common doesn't make the birth of a child any less special. Truly, the newborn baby is a gift given by the Author of Life. Even so, the fact that it is so special doesn't make the birth of a child any less common.

What does this mean? Simply this, when an infant is born, it is a birth unto death in a crooked world that is, itself, dying. Whether being cast upon the earth in Kenya, or delivered in Boise, or beamed out by caesarian section in Denmark, the newborn inhales the air of a fallen creation and draws first breath in a land where life will come to an end somewhere around 107 years to 107 seconds. From the moment of conception one is an heir of everlasting death and birth into this world does not change that status, that is, being born does not bestow the inheritance of eternal life. The birth of a child, even a child of Christian parents, does not mark the time when the angels of heaven rejoice. While the population of the earth added a single digit, Turner's birth eight days ago did not increase the Church's number at all. The faithful at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church did not grow by one. Turner needed to be "born anew to a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and unfading" (1 Peter 11:4).

Those assembled continued listening to the sermon that the apostolic preacher was proclaiming: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus Whom you crucified" (v. 36). Astounding! Was it true what Peter was saying - all those people there - were they responsible for the death of Jesus? All those people congregated there and more ... the whole people responsible? ... men, women, aged, infant ... did they all crucify Jesus? Yes.

But someone else did it ... someone else crucified Him. It was the Gentiles who executed the Christ. Roman soldiers drove the nails, I didn't. The Roman centurion supervised the crucifixion of God, I didn't. Don't you recall the part Pontius Pilate played and the role that Herod had? I wasn't even there on that Friday when others, wicked men like Caiaphas and Annas, delivered Jesus to be killed. When you assign responsibility to all the house of Israel as well as the Gentiles, you make it sound as if everyone had a hand in the crucifixion of Christ. I mean that seems crazy, Peter. You might just as well say that Turner was one of the reasons why Jesus died.

Ahh. Now we're onto something. Who was responsible for Jesus' death? All of humanity was. Each of us were. Adam was. Cain was. Abraham was. Hagar was. Moses was. Peter was. Paul was. Lincoln was. Turner was. The baby not yet conceived was. You were. Truly, concerning the crucifixion of the Christ there is neither female nor male, free nor slave, Greek nor Jew ... for we are all one with respect to "this Jesus Whom you crucified."

"Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" (v. 37)

What stunning sorrow follows the conviction of the heart when one suddenly realizes the awful truth. I am a sinner. I sin. I am guilty. I crucified and killed Jesus. What shall I do? Can I do something to be right with God ... some good deed to be in the Lord's favor ... a pilgrimage, a mission, a devoted life, an offering larger than 30 pieces of silver, a legion of good works to balance the scales? Am I able to undo what has been done? Could I uncrucify Jesus? Am I able to do that? It would mean I would have to dislodge Him from the right hand of God and drag Him into, through and from an empty tomb and then re-attach Him to the cross. Suspended there we must make Him take back His Words ... like "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). But remember, 'forgive them' is 'forgive us' and would we remove the plea of the Son of God that petitions God the Father for our forgiveness ... for the forgiveness of the world? Should we try to remove from the lips of the Savior our hope for salvation? No, may it not ever be so, that we should do such a thing. We are unable either to do or to undo. 'Tis a wretched mess we are in and our consciences are convicted and we are cut to our hearts at our condition and the events that have led us to this congregation this day.

So, preacher-man, do you not hear our confession ... will you not answer our question? Brethren, what shall we do?"

"And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit'" (v. 38). In other words, receive the Holy Spirit wrought gift of repentance and receive the gift of Baptism. This is for your reception of the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of your sins. Repentance and Baptism are not your doing at all. These are the workings of God Who has given them as gifts to you ... that you be forgiven ... you, that is, every one of you. No one is excluded here and the apostle makes certain that those who hear the Word of God know this fact. Therefore, "Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you.'"

That there be no misunderstanding here, Simon Peter repeats this truth. He declares the Word of God such that there be no question about this Good News. "For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him" (v. 39).

The promise of God is to you and to your children. It is intended for anyone and everyone ... Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free, old and young, ones near and ones far away, individuals from all nations and all times ... "every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him." And what is the promise that is "to you and to your children"? 'Tis the Gift of the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins. And remember that where there is forgiveness of sin there is also salvation and eternal life and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the Son and the Father. In order for the promise to be to you and to your children it was "necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory" (Luke 24:26) ... "that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance to the forgiveness of sins should be preached in His Name to all nations" (Luke 24:46-47).

The Son of God came into this world for all, and therefore, especially for you and for your children. At the age of eight days Immanuel was given the name Jesus, a name which means Savior and in that naming, the Infant's first Blood was shed for the world. So surely the Savior is able to give the gift of forgiveness, eternal life and salvation to an eight-day-old baby boy brought to Church by his parents today. God's Gift of forgiveness and eternal life and salvation are given through Baptism. For "when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:4-6).

What does such baptizing with water signify? "It signifies that the Old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever."

Where is this written? "St. Paul writes, Romans, chapter sixth: 'We are buried with Christ by Baptism into death, that, like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' "

This morning Turner died with Christ and was born again, because two thousand years ago Christ Jesus died for Turner and rose again, for the Bible states that Jesus' Life was poured out "for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Two thousand years ago Turner crucified Jesus with his sin. Today Turner died that death with Christ and rises again to walk in newness of life. In Baptism, Jesus connected Turner to the atoning death that Turner's sin caused, but which only took place because the Lamb went willingly. In Baptism, Jesus took Turner into, through and out of the empty Easter tomb, which only took place because Christ, the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world is risen. Dear baptized, your sins and mine and Turner's were placed upon the Incarnate LORD God ... Jesus the Christ. He died that you might live. He is risen that you might live. This is most certainly true. And Peter "testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation'" (v. 40), that is, repent and be baptized everyone of you.

Behold the congregation hearing this sermon. Did everyone agree with what was being said? No. There were those who were offended by this Word of God proclaimed through the mouth of a man. Those who denied the promise of forgiveness intended for them and for their children, as well as rejecting the means of God's grace, namely, Baptism, did not add their silent amen to the Gospel. But others gladly heard the Good News of Peter's sermon and "so those who received his Word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls" (v. 41).

Behold what this congregation did at a result. Men, women, infant, aged, ... all those who received his Word "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (v. 42). In response to the truth of the Gospel, they devoted themselves to correct doctrine and treasuring all things that Jesus had given to them in and by His Word. In fact, "all who believed were together and had all things in common" (v. 44). Oneness in doctrine preceded their common confession of the faith and their fellowship in the truth. Those of the one, holy faith stood together in table fellowship and the breaking of bread in the Lord's Supper.

"Fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (v. 44). They devoted themselves to "the prayers," that is, to specific prayers like the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. This congregation's confession of the faith was sung in her magnificats, her te Deums, her psalms of confession, thanksgivings, pleas and petitions which were the prayers of the faithful gathered together in the Name of the LORD. Indeed the liturgy of the Church is nothing more and certainly nothing less than the song of salvation by the grace of God through faith in Christ - the song sung in the Presence of the Lord. As the Bride of Christ continues to sing her song, Turner is learning the truths that will sustain him a lifetime, hymns stanzas like:

"Day by day, at home, away,
Jesus is my Staff and Stay.
When I hunger Jesus feeds me,
Into pleasant pastures leads me;
When I thirst, He bids me go
Where the quiet waters flow."
(TLH #648, st. 2)

May Turner be devoted to the same apostles' teaching that will prepare him for that day when he will join his mother and father at the Breaking of Bread, that is, at the Lord's Table and for that day when he will be at the everlasting marriage feast of the Lamb Who was slain and Who is alive forevermore. The LORD wants Turner, as well as all of His children and their parents, to be a part of the fellowship and the prayers of His Church. The last member of Our Redeemer congregation to depart and be with Christ in Paradise was Bill Nichols. The latest member of the communion of saints as it is manifested here is Turner Joseph Webb. Today they sing together, along with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven and all the company of this congregation. This has been the way of the Church since the earliest of days, "and day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people" (v. 46).

Day by day, each day and daily the blessed event takes place. Turner here this morning ... Braden in Wyoming a week ago ... two in Bolivar, Missouri, namely, Rebecca and her infant son, Ransom, both baptized on Easter morning ... baby Miles at Coos Bay, Oregon seven days later ... Hailey in the same place on this day ... one far off, Sarah in Ohio seven days ago ... infant Constance in Eagle, Nebraska on Holy Saturday ... two in Altenburg, Missouri, Katie on Easter and Clayton seven days ago ... one nearby, a mom named Kim baptized in Boise this very day... all baptized in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins.

Truly we are privileged to behold what has taken place for centuries among us, namely, that "the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (v. 47). Amen.