

Sermon about Romans 6, 3-8 on 6th Sunday a. Trinity 2022 in BXL (IV)

Greeting: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Bible: 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Sermon: 1. *Baptised, and now?*: Baptised into your name, we sing regularly in memory of our baptism. Again and again we are reminded of our baptism in readings, prayers and songs during the service. But what does that actually mean? Like I'm sure most of us, I can't remember my own baptism. I was just 27 days old - Baptism is so natural to us and yet so far away at the same time. What does it matter that I am baptised? What do I get out of it? To find answers to these questions, the Church always commemorates baptism in a special way on the 6th Sunday after Trinity. The readings want to lead us to a deeper understanding of baptism.

2. *Baptism creates community*: The apostle Paul first states in the epistle that we are united in baptism. It is a moment of our life that we all have in common. We may be extremely different, old or young, poor or rich, from different continents and countries with different languages and so on. But we have baptism in common. It is not different baptisms, as different as we are, but it is

the one baptism in the name of the Triune God. This one baptism creates connection, creates community and congregation through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not a more or less loose human bond that can be broken or that fizzles out. Baptism is a bond made in heaven that cannot be cut by any power in the world. That is why we call baptism a "sacrament" - God acts with his almighty creative word and brings a new reality into existence. In the case of baptism, this means: you, my dear, who have been baptised, now belong to it. Full stop. But it is not only the community of God's children that is formed here, but above all the community with God himself. The apostle Paul describes this as "grown together". (It is not very well translated in English with "united". Indeed, the Greek says "grown together" in an organic way.) That is an amazing idea: we have grown together with God to one organism. We have died with Jesus Christ through baptism - and because we have grown together with him, we will also be resurrected just like him.

3. Freed from sin but not yet recovered: Now we will still be able to imagine that something of us - with Jesus Christ - died in the water of baptism. But already risen? Something is still missing. This is probably also the problem: where can I feel the new man in me? After all, I am saving myself more badly than well through life and running towards the inevitable biological death. And even if it is understandable that the original sin was washed away and drowned in baptism, I still don't really have sin under control. Again and again I have to realise that I am and remain a sinner. The apostle is aware of this fact. He wrote: " For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him." - We have died and are free from sin - but we believe that we shall live. Perfect and future tense. One is true, the other is also true, but still pending.

In ethnology there is the term "liminality". It describes the transition of an individual or a social group from one state to another, that is, when one breaks away from one social order and enters another. In the phase of transition, one set of rules no longer applies and another set does not yet really apply or has not yet been properly internalised. A simple example is the transition from childhood to adulthood. In between, you are no longer really a child, but you are not yet really an adult either. You no longer behave like a child, but you are not yet really sensible, mature and experienced as an adult. - This describes quite well what the apostle Paul wants to explain to us Christians here. We are detached from the old life, the old world with baptism. It applies in full, but the new is still in the making. The new status is no longer a "maybe" - it will come, but it is not yet quite tangible, not quite there.

An example of this: One could perhaps say that it is like having an emergency operation after a bad illness or accident. The acute, life-threatening problem has been solved. The cancerous tumour has been successfully removed. One is cured. But shortly after the operation, one is still very weak and feels anything but healthy. It will take time for the body to regain its strength. A long period of recovery and rehabilitation is necessary. - This is exactly the status we are in. Baptism has set us free from sin, but we are not quite fit yet. Rehab is needed, spiritual recovery, theological muscle building and the right diet. Then the effect of baptism will become more and more noticeable. We are already healthy. Heaven is already open to us.

4. Repentance is also Baptism: It is not as theology that went wrong in the Middle Ages wanted to explain: Baptism has removed all past sin and now one can make an effort to live godly in order not to sin again. And if it does happen, there is repentance and confession and absolution to get rid of the new sin. No, it is precisely this kind of thinking that leads to spiritual uncertainty, to the sale of indulgences and to abuse. This is exactly what Martin Luther had to write and preach against. Repentance is nothing other than baptismal remembrance. Remembrance of the one baptism in which I also participate through my baptism. It is fumbling for the bond of union that never breaks. That is why Martin Luther said, "One should crawl into baptism every day, so that one may come out of it freshly revived." By this he means repentance, the repentance of one's sins and giving them away to God. Then comes the promise based on baptism: Your sins are forgiven. Remember your baptism. All is done. That is why Martin Luther said: "Nothing is lacking in baptism, but faith is always lacking, for we have to learn by faith all our lives. And it can fall, that one says: Behold, faith was there and is no longer there. But of baptism it cannot be said, Behold, there was baptism, and now is baptism no more." That is what we have this Sunday for, to have our faith in our baptism strengthened. May God do so.

Blessing: And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.