

Summer sermon series on the catechism

June 20, 2010

Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY

Based on various scripture passages & the Third Article of the Creed

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The Holy Spirit Has Sanctified You

- I. ...sanctified through the Means of Grace
- II. ...sanctified to live as holy children of God

Fathers... happy Father's day! Whether you are a new dad or a seasoned veteran whose nest is empty, I'm sure you can look back on past Father's Days and remember with fondness both the heartfelt and useful and other times the puzzling and curious gifts you've received: the tie... you never wear ties; tools that you use quite frequently; that craft made by your child and you're still not sure what it's supposed to be; or maybe it was something as simple as a day out with the family.

Sons, daughters, wives and mothers, if you're a last minute shopper, don't think about getting dad a new iPhone from Apple Corp. this year. They're all sold out. So many people logged onto Apple's website to preorder this phone that it crashed. Some poor folks are complaining that they will not be able to have the prized iPhone in their possession on the June 24th release date. They'll have to wait until June 25th or later.

This is the kind of world we live in... people are so set on possessing the newest and best, biggest and flashy. And it's not hard to get sucked into that thinking. We are constantly bombarded with advertisements on TV and billboards, yard sales, Craigslist and eBay; constantly seeing what you don't have but think you need. The thing is you wouldn't have known that you were without it if you had never seen it. The bigger problem is that the stores offer financing for these "must haves." Here, go into debt, borrow money at an exorbitant rate of interest so that you can have what you absolutely cannot live without. Realistically, in 5 years, will anyone really care if you were the first one to have the iPhone on June 24th, 2010? Think about it, how many adults today look at you with envy because you were the first kid on your block to have an Atari? Our children today don't even know what an Atari is!

Don't get me wrong. There's nothing sinful with having material things, nothing wrong with having the newest and best, the latest and greatest. But Jesus is concerned about our attitude and the way we go about attaining these things. He's concerned about the priority we place on our possessions. And he wants to know if we are being good and faithful stewards with our money and possessions. Jesus is more concerned about our souls because our attitudes and priorities can quickly become skewed, and soon possessions and chasing after them, distract us from our greatest treasure,

Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21, ¹⁹ **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** If I set my heart on

earthly things and constantly chase after them, which have no lasting value, which will perish, what then will happen to my heart?

I couldn't help but see a correlation between our problem with the sinful world and the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Oil spills can injure and kill wildlife. Oil has caused the deaths of large numbers of sea birds. When they are coated with oil they often die of hypothermia, dehydration, starvation or drowning. Whales and dolphins may be affected by oil when they surface to breathe, causing lung and airway irritation. Long-term ingestion of subtoxic quantities of oil can lead to depressed immune systems and lead to numerous infections in these animals. This toxic chemical will kill them, unless workers get to them first, clean them off, restore their life, rescue them from certain death.
(http://www.ehow.com/how_4841658_oil-off-animals-affected-spill.html#ixzz0r8x15Bbx)

Through no fault of our own, just by being conceived by two sinful human beings and born into this world, we are coated inside and out with a sinful condition. Our ease of agreeing to the sinful materialistic attitude of the sinful world is evidence of it. We are in danger of dying forever unless someone pulls us out of it and cleans us off and brings us back to life.

Fortunately, when an oil spill occurs, volunteers can clean oil off animals, rescuing them from a certain death.

In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians he writes, "**But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**" (1Cor 6.11) The Apostle Paul describes the work of the Holy Spirit: sanctification. The Bible uses this term to describe what the Holy Spirit did for us. The Holy Spirit pulled us out of the sludge of this unbelieving world that would soon suffocate us forever, and washed us clean and called us to live holy lives.

Just how does the Holy Spirit pull us from the unbelieving world? Animals affected by an oil spill are not too hard to catch. They move much slower because of their condition. Oftentimes workers use nets to catch the affected animals. In 2Thessalonians 2:13,14, Paul describes the tools the Holy Spirit uses to catch us and bring us to faith. "**God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.**" ¹⁴ **He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**" "through the gospel," the good news about Jesus and how he saved us from the unbelieving world. That gospel message is found in God's Word (the Bible) and the Sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper). This gospel message in Word and Sacrament is called the Means of Grace, the means or tools the Holy Spirit uses to call us out of the unbelieving world and clean us off and make us holy. Here in his letter Paul was reminding the congregation in Thessalonica that the Holy Spirit had called them out of the sinful world through the gospel proclaimed by the apostles.

Maybe you can relate to the Christians in Thessalonica. Like them, you, too, had been stuck in the attitudes of the sinful world, living according to your own sense of morality, thinking that

you were doing just fine. Then you received an invitation to come to church or a Bible study, and you heard that your sense of living was all wrong, and that Jesus' life was all right, which God demands to enter heaven, and that through faith, his righteous life covered over your unrighteousness. The Holy Spirit worked through the Word to bring you out of this sinful world to a new life in Christ.

Another tool the Holy Spirit uses is baptism, because the good news of Jesus is found in the means of Holy Baptism, as the Apostle Peter shared with us in the First Lesson (Acts 2:38,39). He told the crowd in Jerusalem at Pentecost that baptism was for them and their children and its purpose was to grant them the forgiveness of their sins and create faith in their hearts. Washing with water and the Word by the Holy Spirit brings the dead to life...

As we said, animals affected by an oil spill are fairly easy to catch. They are usually ailing due to exposure to the oil. After catching the animals, the workers wash them with warm water and a mild dish soap. After this process is completed, the animals will live a full and happy life.

Born into this world, we were not merely ailing, but we were already dead, spiritually. It's easy to catch a dead person, that's exactly what the Holy Spirit did when he took hold of you through the Means of Grace. When the Holy Spirit washed you, it was not with a mild dish soap, but a more powerful detergent was required since we were dead in our sins.

The Holy Spirit applied Christ's blood to you in baptism. The blood of the Lamb of God is holy, innocent, and perfect; blood that is not tainted with a sinful nature, blood that flowed through the veins of a man, who at the same time possessed the full divinity of God. That blood is pure enough, powerful enough to wash all of your sins away, even the sins we confess today, our misplaced priorities, our attachment to the things of this world, our poor management of our possessions, our apathy in fighting against the lure of the sinful world. That blood washed away those sins. That blood was powerful enough to raise you from spiritual death to life. And that's what the Holy Spirit did to you at your baptism. The Holy Spirit rescued you from eternal death, pulling you from your grave, and into the light of Christ and his eternal heaven. You have new life in Christ having been washed in his blood through baptism.

And brothers and sisters, it will happen, because this sinful nature still clings to us, that we fall into the snares of this sinful world. In repentance we turn back to our Lord and Savior and the Holy Spirit uses blood again, this time with body and bread and wine, to remind you in a very physical and miraculous way that it is this blood and body that did wash you clean.

Workers who clean animals from an oil spill are advised not to release into area affected by the oil spill, but to release them in a nearby location unaffected by the spill. We have been cleansed through Christ in baptism. We, however, are not immediately raptured into heaven and rescued from this sinful world. We are released back into the sinful world! In our Second Lesson from the Apostle Peter he explains, **“⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”** (1Peter 2.9) We are in this world, but we do not live as of the world. We now live as of Christ, and in Christ and from Christ. We will no longer constantly run after the latest and greatest, but run in step with the Holy Spirit. No longer will

we boast about our possessions, but boast about our most prized possession, Jesus Christ and his Word. No longer will we allow our possessions to distract us from the gospel, but we will faithfully manage the possessions God gives us and use them to further the preaching of the Gospel. Material goods are temporary, but heaven is eternal. That is our most precious gift.

So, what are you going to give dad for Father's Day? The best gift will not be a new iPhone, it will not be a t-shirt that says, "World's greatest dad." It will not even be quality time spent with him. The greatest gift you can give your dad, is to talk to him today, and remind him of the greatest gift the Holy Spirit gave him when he was washed with Christ's blood. Then thank your dad that he brought you to be baptized and gave you God's greatest gift. To him alone be the glory! Amen!