

The Passion of Our Lord: Calvary

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The reading of any genealogy has underscoring it the very mortality of those on it. You look at the history of your family—your family tree—and names are almost always accompanied by a date or year of birth and a date and year of death. From generations past, men and women were born and died, begetting and birthing the next generation, all the way down to you. And they died.

You heard on Sunday part of the account of the life and death of Father Adam from Genesis 5:

This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created. And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters. So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died. (Genesis 5:1-5)

Down through the generations Genesis 5 runs:

- So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died. (Genesis 5:8)
- So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years; and he died. (Genesis 5:11)
- So all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years; and he died. (Genesis 5:14)
- So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years; and he died. (Genesis 5:17)
- So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died. (Genesis 5:20)
- So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died. (Genesis 5:27)
- So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; and he died. (Genesis 5:31)

The genealogy of Adam, your own family tree...all of it proves to you the warning given to Adam in Paradise. "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17) In the day Adam ate of it, he sinned against God, and His life and that of his descendants, you included, started a downward spiral to death—that day, they and you died! "The wages of sin is death," St. Paul tells us (Romans 6:23a); Adam sinned, as did his sons and his sons' sons, every one since Adam, and they died.

"[J]ust as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned..." (Romans 5:12) As you see the birth and death dates on your genealogy, there is something missing, and you can't get around it. You see your name. You see your birth date. You see the dash after your birth date. But after the dash, there's plenty of space. The date of your death is missing, and there is room for it. Your death is expected, there's no getting around it. Through Adam, sin entered the world, and you, as part of the world, are by nature sinful and unclean, and death came through sin, and thus death spread to all men, even to you.

Dust you are, dear hearer, and to dust you shall return. (cf. Genesis 3:19b) Why? Because the wages of sin is death, and you sin. Your mouth remained silent with Adam's as you stood next to the woman who took from the forbidden tree and ate. Your hand reached with his to grab the fruit from the woman, and your mouth took a big, juicy bite with his. You have tasted from the forbidden fruit, and it tasted too good to stop. Through the ages, through your lifetime, you have added to that sin as every moment of your life you contradict and contra-act the very will of God—you transgress His law. Every time, you might as well be reaching for the fruit that leads to death and taking another big, juicy bite. And you, too, dear hearer, will die.

Into this vale of tears and death the Son of God assumes your human flesh and is born. Jesus' life is one mostly under the radar. Quietly, He remains faithful to the will of God, holding fast to His Law, keeping and obeying every last little bit of it. Then, He is baptized of John in the Jordan. He is

whisked off to be tempted by the devil, and there He does what Adam and Eve would not and could not do as the devil tempted the first man and his bride. Jesus resists the devil's temptations, refusing the forbidden food and refusing to be a tool for the mockery of God's justice, grace, and mercy. The devil leaves Him for a more opportune time.

For the next three years, Jesus continues to hold fast to and obey every last little bit of God's Law. Along the way, He gathers followers and enemies. Along the way, His enemies try to kill Him, but it was not his time, and the devil does not get his way again.

Then, after those three years, the opportune time comes—the devil enters one of Jesus' followers. Judas conspires with the chief priests; he will betray Jesus to them for the price of a dead slave—30 pieces of silver. (cf. Exodus 21:32) In the garden, Judas arrives with the captains of the temple guard, betrays Jesus with a kiss, and they capture Him and take Him to the chief priests. There, every breach of the Law is leveled against Jesus, and He silently accepts the false accusations in your stead. He is taken before Pilate where the charges of blasphemy and treason are leveled against Him, and again, He silently accepts the false accusations in your stead.

You are the sinner, you are the blasphemer, you are the traitor—and Jesus bears these marks for you—from you—even as He bears the marks brought on by the beatings and torture that He endured. “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.” (cf. Isaiah 53:5)

Jesus is led to Calvary—from Gabbatha to Golgotha—and there He is crucified. He sheds His blood and tears, much as a sacrificial lamb would bleed and bleat as the temple sacrifice. And He cries out. Seven times, Jesus spoke:

- “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” (Luke 23:34)
- “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43)
- “Woman, behold your son...Behold your mother!” (John 19:26-27)
- “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”—My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? (Matthew 27:46)
- “I thirst!” (John 19:28)
- “It is finished!” (John 19:30)
- “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” (Luke 23:46)

And He died...

It is finished, dear hearers. Your salvation is accomplished. The reign of death because of sin is done. The wages for your sins have been paid in the death of the Son of God, Jesus Christ crucified, the Lamb of God who spilled His blood as your propitiation! On the day Adam and the woman ate from the fruit, you died, but Jesus' promise to the thief is the promise to you. On this day, you are with Him in Paradise. Where He is, you will be, too—you are there now, even as He is seated on the right hand of the Father, ordering all things for your good, and this because you are baptized into His death and resurrection.

This is the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ for you from the foundation of the world: to give His life as a ransom for many (cf. Matthew 20:28)—to give His life as your ransom. So, go ahead, and look at the blank space on your genealogy under your name. A date will go there. It is the date that you will pass from this life to the grave, the date of the consummation of your baptism. There at the font, the Father made a promise to you, as Jesus expressed, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.” (John 19:28-29) No one, nothing, is able to snatch you from your Father's hand, not even death, for He is greater than death, the conqueror of death. He brings you to life through death by way of baptism into Jesus' death and resurrection. It is finished, you are ransomed, redeemed, restored, renewed...forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.