

Sermon on **Romans 5:12-19** for the First Sunday in Lent  
St. Paul's Lutheran – New Ulm, MN – Pastor N. Scharf

Has anyone ever told you, “You look just like your Mother,” or “You look just like your Father.” Do you resemble your mom or dad? And this can apply not just to looks, but to behaviors, temperaments, ways of thinking, all of it. The phrase is heard in my house, which I don't totally agree with as we discover something unnerving about our children, “If it's bad, it's from dad.” While meant to be funny...I think, it's actually not far off from the stark reality we learn today in God's Word about our first forefather Adam and what we all inherit from him. And Paul shows us that he was a pattern for the gracious greater One to come.

**Know Jesus. Know Peace.**  
**The First Adam Brought Us Death.**  
**The Second Adam Brings Us Life.**

*“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned – To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come. But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ! Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:12-19 – NIV2011).*

Many wonder why there is so much evil in the world. These verses explain what went wrong. God never wanted sin, death, evil, hurt, pain, disobedience, hatred, envy, or the awfulness we experience in this world. But the devil chose to rebel against God. And Adam and Eve later bought the devil's lies and brought about God's promised punishment and curse when Adam sinned. How bad is it? How many funerals have you attended? One per person. Death comes for each human being. Why? Because all are sinners and “*the wages of sin is death.*”

Well, what if I didn't sin like Adam did? I didn't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Maybe that means I'm ok. No. Sadly, you're still a sinner. It's bad and it's from dad. We inherited sin and its penalty from our parents and they from theirs all the way back to Adam and his trespass in the garden. It is called “original sin” or “inherited sin.” David said in Psalm 51 – “sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” How do I know we have this sin? We die. “*Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.*”

Some people try to ignore this and that they are sinners, or they don't want to deal with it because deep down they fear there is no solution. Some boldly pretend that it isn't that bad or that nothing happens after death, and they say there is no hell, and humankind is not that bad. The world offers their idea of solutions. “Ignore it, fill your life up with other pursuits, or “say it's not so bad.” Some unbelievers dangerously and damnably try to make death seem like a wonderful escape. Some governments will send a kit to help someone end their life. But Death is no joke. It's no escape for the unbeliever. Do we sometimes fall for this lie or at least this line of thinking? We set our eyes only on this life and prioritize accordingly. We try to drown out the thought of death by putting in the earbuds of the world – filling our mind with pursuits of opportunities for the future, or a little more fun, or pleasure, or money, or whatever. We let the world set our priorities, and this almost always results in less time in God's house, God's Word, or among God's people, or seeing it as unimportant. But death is no joke.

Up until relatively recent history things happened medically with a person and all the doctors could do was shrug their shoulders. They did not have answers, and even if they did have explanations, they were all out of solutions, and some of their attempted solutions only hurt the patient further – how about a good old bloodletting, or some leaches? The problem with the soul is even greater. The problem of inherited sin still condemns each one of us, and add to it that since the time of Moses we have God's righteous laws spelled out for us and we see how we have transgressed those too – we made it worse. It's far more than an illness. We are spiritually dead by nature, and we

have no power to do anything about it. And the world's solutions of a little more blood-letting, or put in the ear buds of the world's priorities only hurt us. We have no power to get rid of this curse over us. It's Bad and it's from Dad. **The First Adam Brought Us Death inside and out.**

**The Second Adam Brings Us Life.** Throughout history, sicknesses and plagues easily wiped out or killed members of each household, or even city. In war wounded soldiers on the battlefield would die of infections in their wounds that doctors had no defense against. But then God allowed some game changers. He allowed for things like penicillin to be discovered and antibiotics saving countless lives still today, even our own. Some of these drugs when administered completely reverse the effects of the illness or infection. What a miracle! What saving! But they can't stop death, and they don't help everyone. What could undo or overcome what Adam did to all of us? Death reigned over humankind! We need an antidote for death, and for all!

Paul shows Adam was a pattern of the one to come. What is the comparison? He means it in this way: one act of our forefather Adam impacted everyone. And for us it meant he infected, doomed every single human being to death, and even spiritual and eternal death – hell. But God gave one who would impact all humankind in a far greater way – the ultimate game changer. His gift was his own Son, a perfect man, true God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, and by his one act he impacted all mankind. His perfect life he lived for us, the death he died on the cross he suffered and died as our substitute, the substitute for all mankind of all time, even Adam. His resurrection from the grave brought the antidote, and he enables mankind to live now and eternally – forgiven, freed from the curse!

Adam's sin condemned all, but God's gift floods over all mankind, overpowering death and robbing it of its victories. Jesus reigns, and we reign with him through faith in him. *"For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!" "The gift followed many trespasses and brought justification." "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!"*

This is all gift and is ours by grace through faith. It is only *through the one man, Jesus Christ*. We don't have it without him! Faith too is a gift from God. True, many spurn this gracious gift and throw it away or keep it at arm's length and don't get the value of it and lose it, even though it is right there with their name on it, earned by Jesus. Only with Jesus you have peace. You have peace with God. You have peace knowing that your sins are forgiven, and God declares you "not guilty." You have peace knowing even the bad things in life work out for our good. You have peace knowing that death is not the end; suffering, pain and sin is only in this life. Greater life awaits, and you in your new person reign even now. The one who rose from the grave promised *"because I live, you also will live."* Without Jesus, there is no peace. There is only the evil world's intoxicating lies, all meant to deceive us into thinking we don't need Jesus and his overflowing abundant grace for us and our lives. No Jesus, No Peace. But **Know Jesus (trust in him), Know Peace (you have it).**

God in his grace gives game changers. In Toronto, Sir Frederick Banting and associates discovered and introduced the use of insulin in diabetic patients in 1921 and 1922. Before this, type 1 diabetics usually did not live more than a year or two. Often as type 1 diabetic patients became comatose, they were kept in wards that housed up to 50 patients. Family members stood vigil and waited for them to die unable to help them – no solution, only death. One day, Frederick Banting and his associates entered one of these wards, injected insulin into each helpless, dying, comatose patient, one by one. By the time they were finishing injecting the last patients, the first ones they injected were waking up, and literally coming back to life! It makes your ears tingle with amazement just hearing.

On a far greater scale God in his overabundant grace sent Jesus the ultimate game changer for all. He brought forgiveness, life now and eternally. His work fixed us and everything for us. In fact, God now looks at us and says, "You look just like your Father." But he's not talking about Adam. In God's sight, you look just like Jesus, and so we look just like Him. God has washed you clean of your sins as you were baptized into his name, as faith was born and grew in your heart through the Holy Spirit's working through Word and Sacrament making all of Jesus' work yours. Jesus' robe of righteousness and God's declaration of "not guilty" over you is all that God sees.

So, live for him now. Though we feel the effects of the curse of sin on our bodies and we will one day meet our death, it won't be the end. Death's sting is gone. We will live eternally as Jesus, the great game-changer, promised and earned. This is God's gift to you. Death doesn't win. Jesus does and you do too through him and him alone. **Know Jesus, Know Peace. The first Adam brought us death. The Second Adam brought us Life. Amen.**