JESUS PAID OUR DEBT TO GOD

Jan. 13, 2019 Mt. 3:13-17

 Dear Friends in Christ: The saddest day in the history of the world was when Adam and Eve decided they could choose what was best for them. They chose death over life. Remember what God had told them? “You can eat from any tree in the garden but the day you eat from the tree in the middle of the garden you will die.”

 The consequences of our sin is death. We have accepted it. We plan our funerals. We make sure we have a will. We know we are going to die. Every funeral is a reminder of the fatal flaw inside each one of us---we are dying and the day of our departure cannot be put off or avoided.

 This whole scenario is not natural. It’s not what God intended for man. At the end of the 6th day of creation, God saw that everything was good. What happened? The head angel, Lucifer, rebelled in heaven and was removed from his position along with the other angels who followed him and all were exiled to earth where Lucifer proceeded to get his revenge on God by throwing a monkey wrench into God’s beautiful creation.

 Isaiah in his 59th Chapter puts the results this way: “Your sins have separated you from your God. Your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear you.”

 Dr. Martin Luther has put it this way: “Half of us is our own enemy.” That is the sinful nature within all of us. This is why people fight, kill each other, sell drugs that enslave and kill. This is why there are difficulties in families when people can’t get along. Sin affects every part of our lives here on earth.

 And more to the point—if each and every one of us, individually, does not get rid of the sin in our life, that is, be perfect like God demands in Matthew 5:48, he will not be admitted into heaven. Only the holy will see God. Holiness is required for admittance into heaven. Jesus told the story of a man who was at a wedding banquet without the proper attire. He was bound hand and foot and thrown out into everlasting darkness. The proper attire to the heavenly banquet at the end of time is the clothing of faith in Jesus Christ.

 How does one get the proper clothing? This is where the babe of Bethlehem, Immanuel, God with us, becomes so important for the people of earth. Remember that John the Baptist said of Jesus when he saw Jesus coming to the Jordan River: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

 Jesus took away the world’s sin by being born of a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit; Being baptized by his cousin John in the Jordan River was His first step toward giving His life as a ransom for many on the cross. When God the Father spoke from heaven at Jesus’ baptism, saying: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I was well pleased”, this was God’s declaration that the promised Savior was now here, ready to do God’s will.

 This was the only way sin, which damns to hell, could be removed from the body of man. This process is called JUSTIFICATION. Jesus, by becoming flesh and blood, was able to do what man cannot---live a perfect life, obey God perfectly, suffer and die as our substitute.

 God accepted all that Jesus did as payment in full for the sins of all. The resurrection on day 3 signaled the death of death. Just as Jesus rose from the grave, so shall all who believe Him to be the One and only Savior of the world.

 Your debt and mine for our sins is paid in full. This good news became yours the day you were baptized. This changed everything-------for all those who are baptized and believe in Jesus as the Savior of the world; who show in their lives that they love the Lord. Jesus tells us in Luke 11:28: “Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.”

 This answers the question of many---do I have to go to church in order to go to heaven? The 3rd Commandment is ; remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Remember to go to church. Why? To hear what your Savior says about many things. To worship the Savior who shed His holy blood for you. To fellowship with those of like mind. To receive the Lord’s Supper to keep your faith alive. To give of your time.talents. and money for the work of the church.

 Just being a non-attending member of a congregation will not save anyone. The apostle James says in chapter two of his letter: “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” The works we do as Christians is a sign of our faith. Faith is what saves. No works, no faith. No salvation.

 My friends, we have been so blessed by our Triune God. He has made this magnificent universe for us to enjoy. He has sent His own Son down to earth to save us from eternal suffering and He enables us by His Holy Spirit to believe His Word and do His will.

 And it is His will that we tell others about the love of Jesus; to members and non-members. Let’s work together so that the day will come when we will have to set chairs to handle the crowd coming to hear what Jesus has to say. Amen