

Romans 6:1-11August 7, 2011 – 8th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**Walkabout in Hope**✠ **a proper burial (vv.1-7)**✠ **a glorious new life (vv.8-11)**

In the name of Jesus, our crucified and risen Savior, dear baptized Christians – buried and risen:

Too bad I don't have an Aussie accent. Then I could ask this like Crocodile Dundee. Remember Paul Hogan in those 1980's movies? Still in reruns, Mick Dundee carries his long knife in New York City and battles the bad guys in Australia. Maybe a strange place to start a sermon, but I don't know another English expression like the Hebraism here in Paul's Greek original of Romans 6. Verse 4 translates, "**live a new life**," but as a Jewish rabbi, Paul says more literally: "*In newness of life walk about.*"

So with my Minnesotan accent I ask: Have you ever gone on a *Walkabout*? "*Walkabout*" is defined as "journey through the bush, an extended journey through a remote area made by an Australian Aboriginal...to...return...to traditional beliefs."¹ Usually that means leaving Christianity and going back to animism, worshiping the wind, spirits in rocks and trees. Animism denies the existence of a personal God. For a society insisting we evolved from apes that makes sense, but whoever believes the Bible from the very first verse remembers our first parents "**walking in the garden in the cool of the day**" (Genesis 3:8). They could **Walkabout** in pure joy and delight with God until they rebelled. These first verses of Romans 6 take us back to our roots as God's children. Here again we can **Walkabout in Hope** – after...

✠ **a proper burial (vv.1-7)**

We bury things all the time. Some of the Midwest's most popular ski runs are mountains of buried garbage. So some skiers might say, "Let's make more garbage to have more ski runs!" That's like the first verse of our text where people seriously, "**Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?**" Paul just wrote, "**Where sin increased, grace increased all the more.**" (5:20) So some people think, "If God always forgives me, maybe I should sin more for more forgiveness." That's when you figure the skiers fell a few too many times, smacked into too many trees or concrete. We don't have to work at making more sin any more than mountains of garbage. It all comes naturally.

We feel it most in our personal relationships. Even marriages that stay together suffer through trials and troubles caused by two people who love, but can't help hurting each other. One man who lost his first wife to cancer was determined never to hurt his second wife whom he loved dearly. How disappointing when his best efforts failed! Every God-fearing husband and wife can relate. Think of young girls who just want to have fun with their friends, but end up in tears. Boys tend to let things go, but they can get so upset they take their toys and go home – at any age.

What if we could bury all the dumb things we ever did along with all the stupid things we've said? Is there a landfill for broken hearts and shattered dreams? That's your Baptism. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write, "**We were...buried with [Christ] through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**" Everything we hate about ourselves, anger popping out just when you thought you had it under control. Hurting the one you love most. Hands going where you didn't want them to and your feet to places forbidden. Life's nasty secrets that sometimes lie hidden only to us, while everyone else looks on. "**Buried with Christ**" is where they go in our Baptism, into a stinking garbage heap of sin. Christ has died – and we with Him! What a relief to get rid of our old, sinful self by **a proper burial** in Baptism! And thanks to Easter, we don't have to live there. Christ is risen – and us too! Rising with Him we **Walkabout in Hope** high above the shame of this sinful life.

¹ *Encarta Dictionary* – Microsoft Word

It's true! We bury things all the time. My neighbors' beautiful lawns and landscapes would not be possible without a **proper burial**. Lawns grow from buried grass seed. Trees from buried seeds of their kinds. Ugly bulbs buried **in Hope** can spring to life in vibrant flowers. That's the beauty of a **proper burial** with Christ in Baptism. Verse 5 literally calls this being "*planted with Christ*" (KJV). The ugly goes down deep, forever removed from the sight of God. In its place God brings forth ...

✠ a glorious new life (vv.8-11)

We heard about this in our First Lesson from Isaiah (55:10f). As we **Walkabout in Hope**, we see how God sends His Word like the rain and snow from heaven to make our faith grow strong and vibrant in **glorious new life**. He wants our **Hope** as eager as a child standing on tip toe looking for a parade. That's how God's creation, all of nature, is longing for the Day when "*the sons of God [will] be revealed.*" Together we will enjoy "*the glorious freedom of the children of God.*" That was our Second Lesson today from "the Great Victory Chapter," Romans 8 (18-25). Pile all life's trouble on a balance scale and it can't even compare with the full weight of glory we will enjoy with God in heaven.

Some Christians criticize our teaching of Baptism as a Sacrament. They point to apparent failures in Christians baptized as babies who grew into criminals. They think this proves Baptism cannot really do anything. In spite of all the Bible says otherwise, they insist Baptism is only a sacred rite commanded by God. But is that even logical? After church if you found your car with smashed windows and slashed tires, does that prove you drove a wreck to church? How do people's failures disprove God's promises about a **glorious new life** in Baptism? Isn't that why Jesus tells His *Parable of the Sower* in today's Gospel? Nothing wrong with the seed or the sower. But people's hearts can be hard like a path, or rocky, infested with weeds. The good seed of God's Word gets snatched off the path by the devil like ravenous birds. Some excited Christians get choked out of faith by earth's riches or die on the rocks of hardship.

God, the Master Gardener, knows how to prepare the soil and bring forth a **glorious new life**. We **Walkabout in Hope** because "*we died with Christ*" and therefore "*we believe that we will also live with him.*" We look at God's smiling face in Jesus Christ and find the joy of a childhood friend we never want to lose again. True of Christ, true of us: "*The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*"

If you have "a green thumb," you know all about compost. My first attempt was my mom's beautiful hydrangeas in Coos Bay, Oregon. They did so much better with compost. Unfortunately, the compost was not cured. My family was very patient, but I thought the stench was a bit overwhelming with the hydrangeas were right under the bedroom windows. According to the watchman at the county pile, compost is the "miracle cure" for grass too. Neutralize the tannic acid under the oak trees and build up the sandy soil in Shoreview. In Lino Lakes clay it adds oxygen, reduces the need for chemical fertilizers and holds down weeds while holding in moisture. I don't need in ground sprinklers like my neighbors. The secret is getting enough air and water into the mix to cure the compost.

That's the secret of a vibrant faith and a **glorious new life** too. It doesn't always mean green. The best wine comes from vines that are stressed just as the fine wine of faith needs some stress. "*I am the vine; you are the branches,*" Jesus says. "*If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*" (John 15:5 NIV84) Even in prison like Paul it's all about rejoicing "*in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*" (Philippians 4:4) When nothing you do seems to be working, look at what God has done. Instead of nature, look at the Creator. Even more than your salvation, look at your Savior. Instead of focusing on God's gifts, look at the beauty of the Giver in His glorious grace, His loving kindness and tender mercy. Remember Habakkuk, the Minor Prophet with the major message: "*Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.*" (Habakkuk 3:17-19 NIV84) Walk with Jesus. **Walkabout in Hope**. Amen.

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New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church
180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126