

Saved from the Crooked Generation

Easter 3

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Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In First Peter chapter three verse twenty-one, Peter wrote to the disciples in Christ: “Baptism...now saves you.” When does it save? Now. Today. As much today as it did yesterday, as it did in Luther’s time, and as it did in Peter’s time.

But how can baptism save children who are not born? What a crooked generation in which we live. The evil is called good, and the good is called evil. Abortion, rebellion, going after our own way—these are all called good by our generation. Whereas life—that of babies not yet born or those who have amassed many years’ worth of knowledge that can be passed on—letting these lives continue is deemed evil. Whether it is a child created out of wedlock—which is not the fault of the child—or elderly relatives who live in expensive nursing homes, our generation doesn’t find it good for them to live but rather that it would be good for them to die.

How crooked is our generation. Jesus came to give us life, and to give it to us abundantly, from conception through birth and baptism to death, and then to eternal life beyond that. To hear more about this, we will start at the end—the end of our text, and work backwards, to get back to this Easter truth: that we have life, and have it in abundance, because Jesus was crucified for our sins.

Verse 1

Peter, the same Peter who wrote about baptism saving us in the verse earlier, concludes his speech to those gathered at Pentecost saying, “‘For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

“(T)he promise is for you and for your children.” Our generation ought to be ashamed. We, all of us in this generation, are only alive today because our mothers did not abort us. How can our generation condone preventing little ones from having that same right? But not just our generation—we, as Christians, also ought to be ashamed. We know better than anyone that life is a precious gift. We have been given faith to know that God has created each of us individually, giving us each personally the breath of life. More than that, we know that His Promise of a Savior who has brought us eternal life is not only for us but also for our children.

Don’t hear me wrong. God’s Promises completed in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, are for you and me. His Promises are *not* ones we *only* pass along and do not receive ourselves. No. They are for our children, and us. And, as we’ve been hearing since Easter morning, they are not only for us and our children, but for all—all who are far off and everyone whom the Lord our God will call to Himself.

You and I, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, have heard how we were lost in sin. We heard and we repented. We repented through the blessed working of the Holy Spirit in us. And for the sake of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we know our sins have been paid for and that we have God’s Promises fulfilled for us, for you and for me.

Through that same Holy Spirit, we have found that we are able to save ourselves from this sinful generation. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we have been led to the truth that life is a precious gift and that baptism now saves us, our children, and can save others' children, too. We don't go along with our generation but we are ashamed of it.

Verse 2

That's what Peter told his listeners anyway. He told them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

That first word is hard. "Repent." We had to learn it when we were first saved, and we still have to hear it, and do it. That is the life of a Christian according to Martin Luther's first thesis. He wrote: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." And so we repent. And yes, it is hard. It is going against the grain. Our crooked generation says to look out for number one, even if it means putting others to death to do it. God says to repent of this idea and to love and preserve life—not only our own, but that of others—especially those who cannot speak for themselves. Our crooked generation says to do whatever we want. God tells us to repent of that and to live for each other in love.

But God hasn't told us to do these things and left us powerless to do them. He has given us His gifts to accomplish them. He has given us the washing of Holy Baptism. We only have to be baptized once, but we can remember it every day for our entire lives. One thing that you could do—not because God commanded it, it's just something that could be done—my fiancé and I have both found our baptismal banners and we're planning to hang them somewhere in the parsonage. It is not those banners are worth anything of themselves, but they remind us of the gifts God has given us in our baptisms so many years back.

In baptism you have also been saved through the forgiveness of sins given in that sacrament. But baptism is not the only place in which to receive the forgiveness of sins. You and I also receive forgiveness in absolution and in Holy Communion—the other means of grace. And because you and I have been baptized, we have received the Holy Spirit to receive that forgiveness in faith.

What is more, that forgiveness has paid for all sins. Every one of them. If you have had an abortion. If you funded one, even unwittingly. If you have not loved your elderly relatives as you should. If you have not loved any of your neighbors or God as you should—the Easter Gospel of joy is for you. Your sins have been forgiven in Jesus' death on the cross of Calvary. He has saved you and me from this crooked generation.

Verse 3

Peter told his listeners—and us—at the beginning of our text: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Yes, your sins and my sins were the reason Jesus went to the cross. He went there to save you and me from them. That's right, to save us *from* them. To take us away from them. He did it to save us from this crooked generation. And He is in the process of doing that.

As you ladies who were at the LWML Convention yesterday and recognize some of these ideas can attest, our turning from this crooked generation is a life-long process. We are not sinless, but we are being worked toward that end. We are being worked on by the Holy Spirit so that we turn away from our favorite sins and the sins of this wicked and crooked generation. And really, why not? Why wouldn't we want to turn away?

This generation favors death over life. It favors our pitiful, sinful ways over God's perfect and loving ways. Why would we want to go along with it any longer? And though we are not perfect yet, we don't want to continue in this generation any more. Paul wrote in Romans that he was a saint and a sinner, not doing the perfect things he wanted, but rather doing the sinful things he didn't want to do. But that's just it. Through the Spirit working in him, he no longer wanted to be part of his sinful generation. And through the same Holy Spirit given to you at your baptism, you no longer desire to live in our crooked generation either.

But it's all about Jesus. None of this would be possible without His death on the cross of Calvary and His rising from the dead. Therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus who was crucified for you and for me and for all whom God would call to believe in Him. In Jesus' Name. Amen.