

Pentecost 3, 2010  
Good Hope Lutheran Church  
Galatians 2

From Galatians chapter 2. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

In the name of Jesus Christ +, AMEN.

Today I'd like to talk a bit about Baptism, and our new life in Christ. I'd like to say something about the grace of God—what it is, how it works, how we understand it. I'd like to think about these and other big important issues with you, and I'd like to *start*, by talking about a goofy movie you may have seen. It's called Groundhog's Day, and it stars the comedian Bill Murray. I know it's against our religion to raise our hands in church, but, for the record, how many of you have ever seen the movie Groundhog's Day?

Ok. In this movie, the actor Bill Murray plays the part of a really rude and obnoxious TV news personality. And Murray and his "Live at Five Action News Team" have been sent to the quaint little town of Punxsutawney P.A. to film a story for the evening news about Phil, the groundhog who pops up every February 2<sup>nd</sup>, sees his shadow, and then goes straight back underground again. And all day long Murray is just crude and rude and nasty to everybody he meets, he is totally inappropriate, to say the least. Well he goes back to his hotel at the end of the day, falls asleep, gets up the next

morning—only it's not the next morning. Somehow, somehow it's the same day all over again. Murray is compelled somehow to live Groundhog's Day February 2<sup>nd</sup> all over again, well. He's even cruder and ruder this time, he's more obnoxious than ever! And at the end of the day he goes back to his hotel, falls asleep, gets up the next day—it's not the next day! It's Groundhog's Day February 2<sup>nd</sup> all over again! And this keeps up for the whole movie, somehow Murray keeps getting forced to live the same day over and over and over again.

But an interesting thing happens. As he lives this day over and over and over again, gradually Murray becomes less and less crude and, less and less rude. He begins to see his own faults and his own shortcomings, he learns some valuable lessons about kindness and love. He's a changed man by the end of the movie, a better person in every way. And in the last scene, he goes back to his hotel at the end of the day, falls asleep, gets up the next morning—and it really is the next morning. It really is, a whole new day.

And before I leave this movie behind, one last thing about it—Bill Murray's character becomes a much better person by the movie's end, how? How, well it's tempting to simply say he makes progress, he learns lessons, he changes in this way or that, ok. But how? He moves ahead, by going back. He moves ahead by going back over and over to this one key day, and

going through it again and again. Every day is *that* day—you move ahead, by never really leaving that one key day behind.

I'd like to suggest this is what it's like for us as Christians. This is what we mean by the grace of God, this is how the grace of God works within us, we move ahead in life—by going back. *God* moves us ahead in life, God shapes us and changes us and works on us inside and out—we are *moved* ahead in life by God, because in His grace He never really lets us leave one key day behind. We keep living that same day over and over again, and that day—as we Lutherans understand things. That day, is the day of our Baptism.

I was born a sinful human being. I was born crude, rude, and totally inappropriate—and those are my good points. Enslaved by sin, in love only with myself. Other people are there to be used, and God is what I see when I look in the mirror, I was born a sinful human being, one destined for nothing more than death. But God took pity on me. God was gracious to me, in the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for me. For His sake God has forgiven me all my sins, and God promised me a place in heaven, He's set me on a whole new course in life. By God's grace I have been saved, and it happened *for me*; the day I was baptized. That's what Baptism is—the grace of God grabbing hold of me, and you, saving us changing us setting us free. Making us God's children now and forever, that's what the

Lord Jesus does for us in Baptism.

God's children now and forever, you and me—only, it doesn't always look like it, does it? We don't always look much like God's children, nor do we act like it, sin doesn't want to let go of us. Old habits die hard, being crude and rude and obnoxious is still pretty easy for us. Sin just, comes so natural.

So this is what the grace of God is and does—every morning, it is the grace of God to bring me back to my Baptism. Every day was Groundhog's Day for Bill Murray, ok, for us as Lutheran Christians, the way we understand things—every day is the day of your Baptism. Every day you start over there, at the font, square one, I am a sinner. I live like an enemy of God, my words and deeds are all wrong and death is what I deserve. But Jesus died instead. Jesus died instead and He grabbed me in the water—you too—and He promised us great things. By God's grace we are saved. And a funny thing happens when you live that one day over and over again—God does start working on you, inside and out, and God can maybe be seen, making progress with your life? I hope so. Just let it be, that the grace of God compels you every day to live that *one* day over and over again, live the day of your Baptism over and over again—till at last, you close your eyes in death, and when you wake up—it really is, a brand new day.

All of this is what St. Paul points to in his letters in the New Testament.

Today, Galatians, 2, I point you especially to verses 19 and 20. “I have been crucified with Christ,” Paul says. This is a way Paul has of speaking of Baptism, I was crucified with Christ. I was baptized. And it’s no longer me, but Christ at work within me. The life I live now, it is to be Christ at work within me—every day that is our goal—*Christ at work within me!* And it is the grace of God to bring us to that point *today*, by taking us back to the day of our Baptism. And may the Lord do so for us every day, till by His grace, His promised new day dawns upon this world at last. In the name of Jesus Christ, AMEN.