

Genesis 1:1-5

“Today is the first day of the rest of your life.” This motivational quote is one you may have heard before. Certainly it has helped people to begin anew with a positive and confident attitude. I’m not sure who coined the phrase, but this morning we look at it in connection with the very first words of the Bible.

That was, without question, the first day. Prior to this day there was nothing. When God began creating,” *the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.*” The first two verses of Scripture tell us how it was. It was anything but lovely. It was chaos, disorder, emptiness.

But there was this: “*And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*” The Spirit and the waters...water and Spirit. Just like the banner to my right. Except this banner is not put up here in church when Genesis 1 is read; it’s put up for baptisms...today, for Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River.

God tells us already in the first five verses of the Bible what it means to be baptized. Before baptism, our lives are “without form and void, and full of darkness.” And might I use the word...unfinished. When the earth was without form and void, with darkness over the face of the deep, it was incomplete. God was not finished with it. The words, “*And it was very good,*” were not spoken yet from His mouth. The earth was not to remain in darkness. It was not left to be an unfinished mass of emptiness. And so God took action. His Spirit hovered over the waters, and He spoke the word: “*Let there be light.*” “*And there was light.*” And then, and only then, did God say that it was good.

God took the very same action in your life. His Spirit hovered over the face of the waters. And when those waters were sprinkled over you, God spoke His word through the mouth of your pastor, and there was light. You were made a child of the light. And God saw that it was good. The day of your baptism was the first day of the rest of your life.

How is that life going for you? Even the baptized deal with troubles. Even the baptized suffer heartache. Even the baptized fail miserably. We are tempted, and we give in. We struggle with sin. We who were made children of the light, freely, of our own sinful will, go back to, and live in darkness. And it is not good. God did not say that the earth, without form, was good. He did not call the darkness good. He saw that the “*light was good.*”

The only thing that is good about you is He who lives within you--Jesus Christ, into whom you are baptized. He is the true Light which has come into the world, which has come into your heart and life. Apart from Christ there is only darkness. But you are children of light. Once you were without form and void. Once you were darkness. But God said, “*Let there be light,*” and through the water and the Spirit, you were made into the sons and daughters of the Light.

The first day was the day that God created light. And so your baptism into Christ was the first day of the rest of your life. But so is today. God began creating on the first day of the week. It was a Sunday. How fitting that each and every Sunday morning we come to that place where the

true Light shines; to where darkness is dispelled; to where God turns disorder into order; to that place where God gives us the gifts of the Light.

When you come to church on the first day of the week, your life begins anew. There was nothing but emptiness and darkness before that first Sunday. But when God spoke over the waters and Spirit, light appeared, and it was good. This was, for the earth, its beginning.

Today life begins anew for you. There is darkness and emptiness in your past, and in mine. We have sinned, you and I. Open sins, secret sins, sins we are aware of, sins of which we are unaware. These sins are not just committed by the heathen out in the world. We who are the baptized commit them also.

But today is the first day of the rest of your life. Today God returns you to your baptism. "*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*" is how we began our worship. The same words God spoke when you were baptized. Today you and I confessed that the sin in our life has brought us back into the darkness. We confess that our lives have become without form, and void, and full of emptiness.

But God spoke to you through the mouth of your pastor, "Let there be light!" And there was light. Your Light, and mine, suffered and died on a cross. He entered into our darkness. He emptied Himself and became nothing..."*a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*" But this Jesus burst forth from the grave in a blaze of light, and His word to you is the word of forgiveness.

Today your life begins anew. Your past sins are forgiven. The darkness of last week is no more. Whatever you did that was wrong, it is fully pardoned. There is no sentence of condemnation hanging over you. Jesus took it for you. God has no charge against you. You are completely forgiven. Today your life begins anew.

Do you see what this means? You no longer have to give in to drugs, or alcohol, or pornography. Maybe you did in the past. But today your life begins anew. You no longer have to be angry with your spouse, or with your children, or with that stubborn boss, coworker, or church member. Maybe you were angry in the past. But today your life begins anew.

If there is sin, and anger, and guilt in your past--even just yesterday--God does not know it. He does not see it in His memory. Jesus removed it. If God has forgotten it, why should you remember it? Why should you hang on to your anger? Why should you feel guilt over your sin? You are forgiven. You are a child of the Light who lives in you. You are baptized into Christ. Today, and every day that you begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is the first day of the rest of your life. Amen.