A man who is born of a woman is short-lived and full of troubles.
He comes up like a flower, and is cut down.
He flees like a shadow and does not remain.
You observe this and call Me to face your judgment?
Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing?
No one! If the number of his days and months are determined by You, and You have set his limits, then he cannot cross them. [Job 14:1-5]

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Think of it. Too many live as if they can scare away death. Others live as if they're never going to die. The truth of Job's sermon though is confirmed by all Scripture, by daily experience (you have often heard verses one and two spoken beside open graves), and by your own sober thoughts, when you do think. Yet, how shallow is our impression of life? Watching flowers cut down. Noticing the fleeing shadow -- then we think. This is how we picture our lives.

Is this simply the way it is? It is *a* way that we look at the world. How we judge the value of our lives. It's a perverted view. God didn't create you to be cut down. This way of imagining God's complicity in your death is the result of sin. We Christians have Jesus. We are baptized. *We have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life* [Romans 6:4] ... but we die. We die because we are sinful and sin daily. The idea that God randomly picks the hour you will die is superstitious nonsense. Your sin makes you die, just as your sin also darkens your lives with troubles.

So pay attention to death. You can find it easily because it hangs together with sin. Don't cling to what others imagine death is about. Those who don't have baptismal hope. They wrongly believe we're born to adjust to new conditions and discoveries. We are pliable. Love doesn't need to be a commandment to die for your neighbor. Faith doesn't need to be a command to die for God. We are our own gods. We are here to unlearn the teachings of the church, state, and our educational system. We are here to drink beer. We are here to kill and make war. We are here to laugh at the odds and live our lives so well that death will tremble to take us.

What is terrible though is not death but the lives people imagine they live or don't live until their death. They don't trust God. They don't love their neighbor. Their whole life is about forgetting. Their regrets and guilt hold them hostage. They concentrate too much on movies, money, and family. Their minds are full of cotton. They swallow God without thinking. They swallow country without thinking. Soon they forget how to think. They let others think for them. Their brains are stuffed with cotton. They look ugly. They talk ugly. They walk ugly. Most people's deaths are a sham. There's almost nothing of what God created left to die.

But you belong to Christ Jesus. *As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* [Galatians 3:27] Therefore, make sure of forgiveness, which leads to eternal life, by repentance and faith. Repent and believe the good news about Jesus Christ.

Repentance doesn't involve your admission of guilt. It doesn't require a description of faults, but the confession that you are dead. Repentance isn't a medicine that helps you recover. If you could recover – if you could say that beginning tomorrow or the week after next you would be well again – all you would need to do is apologize. Then maybe you wouldn't have to die. You could simply say that you're very sorry and that's all behind you. You're better now. Fully recovered ... You never recover. You sin. You die. If you live again, it's not because the old parts of your life are jiggled back into their proper places.

Repentance has nothing to do with getting yourselves forgiven. It won't help you live your best life now. Repentance isn't a transaction. It's not a negotiation. It doesn't secure God's forgiveness. Repentance is the death rattle of a corpse that finally can afford to admit he's dead. Then you confess to Him what He's already said to you, to wake yourselves up to who you are and what you've been given. You're not forgiven because you made yourselves forgivable. You are not absolved because you've made yourselves clean. You are forgiven, given new hope and new life, solely because you are dead, and there's a Forgiver who lives to raise the dead.

Jesus came to raise the dead. He didn't come to fix you. He didn't come to teach the teachable, improve the improvable, or reform the reformable. None of those things work. Without waiting for your rehabilitation, some wholly other Life takes responsibility for your sin and death ... and life. Jesus does not do things tit-for-tat. He acts finally and fully from the start, when He baptizes you.

Water from His death cleanses you in the baptismal washing. It cools your feverish conscience. Further, His blood fills the cup you drink. With His blood your flesh and condemned body, riddled with disorder, is ordered again with God in forgiveness of sins. In Jesus' wounds you are safely hidden from your sin and death. From His wounds flows the Life that is full of blessing, faithfulness, and life for you.

You are Baptized. You are forgiven. God has brought you an old, unclean, dead thing out of the waters of baptism a new, clean thing alive in Christ. In the midst of death you have the certainty that Life is with you. Accept death then patiently, humbly, with the sure and certain hope that your life is hidden in Jesus now, today, and forever.

It is in His body that Jesus offers the sacrifice. It is in His body that you draw near to God. The temple in which we now worship God is the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. The very body, born of Mary, crucified for you and raised from the dead is fed to you. You are created into His body. Joined to Christ the Head. In Him and in this body you worship God. In Him and in this body you have Life, so that when this watery liturgy of the baptized is over, and you leave here it is

not over. Out of this house the waters of life flow. The Lord's river and fountain flood the world. The waters of life flowing, enlivening you through all your days to His coming on the Last Day. Until then it is day by day. Daily your sins are washed away. Clothed in Christ you go on wetly robed all the way to eternal life. Amen.

Let us pray...

Almighty, eternal God, in Your strict judgment You damned the unbelieving world with the flood. By Your great mercy You preserved faithful Noah and seven with him. You drowned hardened Pharaoh and all his men in the Red Sea. Through it You led Your people Israel with dry feet. In this way You signaled ahead with this bath Your Holy Baptism. By the baptism of Your dear child, our Lord Jesus Christ, You hallowed and set forth the Jordan and water everywhere to be a blessed flood and boundless washing away of our sins.

For the sake of that unfathomable mercy of Yours, we implore that You would graciously look upon this congregation and grant salvation with true faith by the Holy Spirit. Thus through this saving flood [continue to] drown and put an end to all this as born in us from Adam, and all that we ourselves have added to that. Separate us from the number of the unbelievers, and preserve us dry and safe in the ark of Your Holy Church. Keep us always fervent in spirit, joyful in hope, serving Your Name, so that with all the believers we may come to eternal life according to Your promise, made worthy through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.