

My job this morning is to proclaim the word of God that will kill you. I have been assigned through the words that I speak to leave you absolutely no hope in yourself. Everything in you that is unworthy of God is to be destroyed. For God has no intention of sharing the throne of your heart with anyone or anything.

How's that for an introduction to a sermon. Bang. He starts right in to clobber us.

No little story to settle ourselves in. Just God wants you dead. He'll never convince us with that.

Convincing. That is what the Old Adam or Old Eve in me likes. There is no dying in convincing.

God, convince me. God, show me that you are better than all the gods I worship now. God, give me a painless way to be happier. Tell me how to hire some angels for my protection. Give me some forgiveness that will let me keep right on the roads I travel now.

Yes, convince me. As long as God is in the convincing and not in the killing business, then I can still be god. Lord over my life, the one in charge. *I can't be a little better tomorrow, I can't be a little better, only I will be good enough.*

That's what we want, isn't it. We want a god that won't interfere too much. We want a god that won't put to death that me that thinks I can sit in judgement of everyone else. He's good, she's bad, he's deserving, she's not. She's a saint, he's a sinner. She should be honored, he condemned.

We want a god that won't ask too many questions about my dishonesty. I don't want to hear that God is not pleased with the compromising person I've become. God is not convinced by the little private discussions that begin: I'm not so bad.

God is not fooled by the things I choose not to think about as if not thinking about them will make them go away.

A man named Saul went down the road convinced that he was right, that he was good, that he was on the side of God and bang, God killed him. Blind, three days and three nights no food or water. God did not reason with him, spend three hours quoting Bible verses to him. God just killed that man named Saul.

Saul had gone down that road convinced that the followers of Jesus Christ were enemies of God. Jesus stopped him, blinded him, and Saul once he had regained his sight, told everyone Jesus is the Son of God.

Saul lost his whole old life. All his friends, his power, his status, they all disappeared. It is like a friend of my^{ns} told me it was when he stopped drinking. All the old friends, and all the old places, all the old habits were gone. Dead to the person who no longer drank.

Saul lost his whole old life, and his new life was Jesus. Now he was depending on the very people he had so recently hated. And he was glad of it. For now Christ was enthroned in his heart.

So is that the end of his story? Saul's saved. Paul starts preaching. Everything is fine.

The part of me and you that God wants dead would like it that way. God bothers you once in a big way then leaves you alone.

Then we could say that I was baptized. Or I had this conversion experience in 1983, or I read through the bible and have been different ever since. But Martin Luther says it this way:

What does baptism mean for daily living? It means that our sinful self with all its evil deeds and desires should be drowned through daily repentance and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever.

Daily drowning. Daily hearing God's word and being killed by that word. There is no more hope in you. There is no room on the throne of your heart for any but Christ.

You are dead. You have absolutely nothing to offer to God. no deeds, no excuses, nothing.

But now I am Ananias whom God sends to you to raise you out of death. You are a child of God. Loved by God for Jesus sake. You are new. As new as a baby born. Nothing from the old clings to you now. It has all been hung up on the cross with Christ. There is no more old in you. Only Christ in you. God says so.

Amen.