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Pentecost IV & Proper 6  
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Text: II Corinthians 5:1 – 17  
Title: Two Guys Named Adam

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. For today's sermon, I'm going to tell you about two people who are very different, but who are also very much the same. The first man is named Adam. He's got a bit of a mean streak in him, and that's been a part of him ever since he was a little baby. When he was around other kids, he'd have no problem reaching out and smacking someone who wasn't doing what he wanted, or he would just throw terrible fits when he didn't get his way.

Adam has always had a problem with patience and sharing too. Nothing could make him share a favorite toy with another kid if he wasn't ready too, and when he wanted something, it had better be given to him at that very moment. If his desires weren't satisfied when he wanted it to happen, then the whole world was going to hear about it because of the crying and yelling that he would do. His parents did their best to teach him patience and humility, but it didn't do much to improve his behavior.

As Adam got older the fits began to subside, but the selfish streak continued to grow. He never really showed any concern for others, and when he did it was always with the under-lying motivation of trying to get something for himself out of the situation. A perfect example happened one time when he was 14 years old. He was eating lunch with some friends at McDonald's when he noticed a woman leave her iPad at the table where she had been sitting. He immediately snatched it up and called out to the lady as she was leaving. When she returned to retrieve her property she was very grateful to him. She told him how nice he was and thanked him over and over again for being so honest. Then she opened up her purse and reached into it,

and anyone watching would have seen Adam's face light up at the large amount of cash clearly visible in it. But the look of contempt and disappointment on his face was obvious to anyone who was watching when she handed him a candy bar as a reward instead of one of the large bills that he was hoping to get. As the two of them turned to walk away from each other, Adam could be heard saying out loud, "I should have kept it."

As he grew older, Adam began to take an even more self-centered view of life. He was always looking out for number one, and never let anything or anyone get in the way of getting what he wanted when he wanted it. The good life for him was about having the best of all things, and even though he always had the newest and the most expensive item, the satisfaction that came from obtaining it never really lasted. So he would pour his energy into getting the next big thing. That's probably why his marriages never seemed to last more than a few years. He was always getting bored with one wife and family and wanting to move on to find someone better.

In spite of the example that he had from his own parents, Adam wasn't exactly what you'd consider to be a model father. He didn't mind having his kids around as long as it was convenient for him. As soon as there was any kind of scheduling conflict with work or his social life or just about anything else though, his time with his kids was the first thing that he cut out of the schedule. It was safe to say that they weren't exactly high on his priority list. For that matter, his own parents weren't much higher on that list. Adam only talked to them when he absolutely had to, and he was really just waiting for them to pass away so that he could get what was coming to him from their estate.

If you had to pick one word to describe Adam, it wouldn't be unfair for you to pick the word "fighter," in a very literal way. When someone challenged him at work, he would put

everything that he had into defending his actions and overcoming the person who was trying to get ahead of him. The word “ethics” had little or no meaning to him. He was willing to say or do whatever was necessary to deflect any kind of criticism from him. If he was out with a group of people having a good time at a club, Adam was the one who was most likely to get into a confrontation with somebody else there. At the very least, it would probably come down to him arguing loudly with another customer until he was asked to leave, but he could never do it without throwing at least one more insult toward his adversary.

Because of his self-centeredness, Adam never really had much use for a relationship with God. It wasn't that he was an out-right atheist, but he just couldn't bring himself to submit to all of the rules and regulations that he saw in religion. Passages such as II Corinthians 5:14 which mention the love of Christ controlling us left him with an intense desire to have nothing to do with Christ. Why would he want someone controlling him, even someone who was supposed to be as good and loving as Christ? Why would he want to follow a bunch of rules that would just put him at a disadvantage when competing against everyone else and prevent him from having a good time and being happy? Adam didn't need the crutch of religion because he could do everything that he needed to do on his own. God's rules would just get in the way of his success and happiness.

But like I said, this is about two men, and so far I've only described the first one. The second man is also named Adam, and even though he's different from the first one, he's also very much the same. The similarities go far beyond their name. This second Adam has some of the same selfish and self-centered attitudes that the first one did. When he was younger he wanted to be first in almost everything, and he started out with not being very patient or giving. What he had was his, and he didn't want to share it willingly with anyone. At many different

points in his life, his motivations were pretty questionable. If he had found that iPad in McDonald's, he probably would have given it back hoping for a reward that was greater than a simple candy bar. After all, he's only human, and the desire to get a reward for a good deed is really pretty normal.

The biggest difference in this Adam is his willingness to submit to the Lord, and that has made all of the difference in his life. This Adam wants to do better. He knows that he can be self-centered, and he doesn't like it. He knows that he can be greedy, and he wants to put that behind him.

This Adam wants to put others and their needs ahead of his own. He works to be a better husband and a better father, and even though he fails regularly in these things, he knows that the love of Christ is controlling him and that Christ's love is enough to cover any sin that he commits. In II Corinthians 5, St. Paul writes, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

Even with the differences that exist, these two Adams – or Eves if you prefer – are found in each and every Christian. The first Adam is usually referred to as the "old Adam," and he is a direct descendant of the very first Adam that we saw in last week's sermon based in the Garden of Eden. The old Adam likes being controlled by the sinful nature, and despises the very thought of being submissive to God. The old Adam wants to be in control of the person, and it chases after the promise of the serpent to become like God. The old Adam hates the new Adam, and is constantly fighting against him for control of a person. He is a sinner.

But in Christ, a new Adam is born through Holy Baptism. He is a completely new person taking the place of the old Adam, or as St. Paul puts it at the end of our Epistle, "The old has passed away...the new has come." This is a constant struggle between these two Adams because

each time a person sins, the old Adam rears its ugly head once again to try and take over, but in Christ, the new Adam returns each and every time that forgiveness is given. St. Paul talks about this in today's Epistle also, "For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling...so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life."

The groaning that he is talking about comes from the struggle between the old Adam and the new Adam. We groan as sin continues to have an effect on our bodies, and that groaning continues until our mortal body dies and is released from those sinful consequences. Or as Paul says, "what is mortal" is "...swallowed up by life." Through Christ our life is made immortal.

"So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."

The time is coming when we will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and your old Adam will do everything that it can to be in control when that day comes. But your new Adam is stronger because it is in Christ, and God has given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that He will give you life. For now, the new Adam is anxiously waiting for the Lord's return so that it can be at home with the Lord, and until that day arrives it works to please Him by living in faith, knowing that works are never enough. Until that day comes, we work to persuade others that Christ has died for all who are living as the old Adams so that the new Adam may take control under the love of Christ. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.