

All of us can complain about the stories we see in the news, and I'm sure if you asked someone on the street, they would have an idea of what it would take to fix this country. Maybe put the right guy in office, maybe get parents to start doing their part, or simply returning back to the values of the Founding Fathers— however you might define those.

But I think that if everyone in America could take to heart these lessons from today's service, especially the Gospel reading from John and the Epistle Reading from Ephesians, the America we live in would be much different. What a difference the Good News of Jesus makes! **BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH, GOD HAS TAKEN US FROM DEATH TO LIFE.**

The Apostle Paul starts with the bad news. I. Apart from God, we are the walking dead (v. 1–3). **“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked,”** Paul tells us that we are dead. What can a dead body do? Can it take out the trash? Can it pay taxes? Can it hug a loved one? No! A dead body is dead.

In the realm of spiritual things, we cannot do anything positive. We cannot choose to follow God. We cannot give our lives to Jesus. We cannot earn enough good works to gain God's favor. We are stuck. Dead men tell no tales.

Yet you might say, “Pastor, that can't be! You're saying that everyone is dead? I have friends in my neighborhood who are living well without God. They have more money and seem to be living it up better than me, and I'm a Christian!”

But Paul further specifies, it's not that we're just dead spiritually, we're the walking dead. Like zombies, fallen humanity might appear to be alive, but it has no actual life. He goes on to say, **“we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”**

A zombie is completely controlled by its passions. For those of you who watch horror movies, you know the one thing that zombies want, which is brains. They will do anything to get them. They will chase after any human to attack and fulfill their crooked desires.

The world around us with its fallen nature may not be so easy to pinpoint, their desires aren't so crude. But to be apart from God is to be defined by your passions and desires of body and mind. The walking dead of our world cries out, brains! They don't want to eat brains, but they will do anything to gain knowledge and skills to get them ahead. The walking dead of our world cries out: fame! They want to do anything to gain popularity and recognition in their chosen field. They cry out: fortune! Just another raise, another bonus, another paycheck will satisfy that urge. Still yet others cry out: fun! The walking dead of our world want total entertainment forever. As long as they know where's the next party, what's the next hit Netflix show, how much is the coolest gadget.

Brains, fame, fortune, fun! We say that we're living in a free country, but often our freedom is an excuse to shuffle off to the next diversion, to scratch the latest itch, to become a slave to our passions, desires, and sins. All of us were once like that, and even as Christians, we're tempted to return to the lifestyle of the walking dead.

II. By grace through faith, God has made us alive in Christ (v. 4–9). Paul continues, **“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—”** Even when you were shuffling off from one passion and desire to the next, God had a plan to save you. God sent His Son Jesus to live the perfect life that we couldn't live. Jesus never sinned. He was never controlled by sinful selfish desires. Everything He did, He did for others. None of the miracles He did in His ministry were done for Himself, but only to help those in need or to demonstrate His divinity to others. In a world of the walking dead, Jesus showed others what it truly meant to be alive.

Not everyone liked that. The religious types didn't like Jesus' lively attitude, and they sent Him to be executed on the cross. In this act of the one truly living one dying, Jesus took on the sins of the world. He took on your sins, your death, your selfish desires, and He crucified them. He forgave your sins. He forgave you. On the third day He rose again from the dead, and He ascended into heaven from which He reigns in glory and power.

And everything that belongs to Jesus is now yours. In exchange for your death, you get His life. In exchange for your sin, you get His perfection. In exchange for your selfishness, you get His selflessness. He did all of this for you even while you were still a sinner, even when you were still a zombie, mumbling brains, fame, fortune, or fun under your breath and shuffling off to the next amusement.

The life-changing truth of Christianity is this: **“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”** By trusting in Jesus to be Your Savior, you are given new life as a gift. It is a gift that you have received completely free of charge. It is not because of how good you've been, or how well-behaved. Just as a corpse can do nothing to enliven itself, so too you in your spiritual state of being dead to sin can do nothing to make yourself alive.

That's what grace is. Grace is something you don't deserve. Grace is being given an A when you deserve a D. Grace is what God shows to us in His Son Jesus Christ. If more people truly knew the power of God's grace, I think we would live in a very different world.

Because it would be enough if God simply took our sins away. It would be more than enough if He gave us a blank slate, but He doesn't just do that. **“But**

God, being rich in mercy, ... raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

We too ascend with Christ, and we find that we get every good and perfect gift. We get the immeasurable riches of his grace: the brains, the fame, the fortune, the fun is ours in Christ Jesus.

To be certain not in a worldly sense. God gives us something better than that. Instead of Jeopardy facts and useless trivia, God fills us with knowledge of His Son Jesus and knowledge that leads to eternal life. Instead of earthly fame which fades with time, God gives us eternal fame in His Son Jesus. Instead of worldly fortunes which can be damaged by stock market crashes, rust, and fire, God gives us heavenly treasures which cannot be taken away. Instead of worldly fun which often leaves us with a headache the next morning, God gives us the eternal joys of heaven which last forever.

God is in the business of making the walking dead alive again. He is in the business of turning sinners into saints and the selfish into selfless. He does this all through believing in Jesus as that Savior who is mighty to save as a completely free gift: by grace alone through faith alone.

III. Alive in Christ, we now walk in good works (v. 10). Why would God do all of this? We all know that what you're supposed to do with zombies is destroy them. Why would the Lord bother saving us, the walking dead? Paul gives the reason: **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”**

Walking in our selfish desires was never what God intended. God created us as His workmanship. We are hand-crafted by the Lord God to do good works. God wanted us to walk in good works that we as His good creation may do good.

Dear Christian friend, we have been blessed by God to be a blessing to others. The Lord God makes beautiful things out of dust so that we too can make beauty where there was previously chaos. God has taken us out of darkness so that we can proclaim His excellencies in His marvelous light. We are God's workmanship so that we can live lives of praise. In the words of a hymn: “That in these gray and latter days, there may be those whose life is praise, Each life a high doxology, To Father, Son, and unto Thee.”

And all of these are prepared beforehand. You don't need to fret about whether you've done enough. You have been saved by grace, after all. God has good works prepared for you to do even before you were born. Let us praise the Lord who has called us from a life of the walking dead to a life of walking in His praises. Amen!