

Fourth Sunday in Lent
Ephesians 2:1-10/ "Pure Gift."

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Ephesians 2:1-10 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- ³among whom 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. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Let us pray: Fast bound in Satan's chains I lay, death brooded darkly over me. Sin was my torment night and day, in sin my mother bore me, but daily deeper still I fell. My life became a living hell, so firmly sin possessed me. My own good works all came to naught, no grace or merit gaining. Free will against God's judgement fought, dead to all good remaining. My fears increased till sheer despair. Left only death to be my share. The pangs of hell I suffered. Lord have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen.

I remember vividly when my dad passed away, it was only a few months ago, there lay his dead body on his bed. It took several minutes and it finally hit our family that he was dead. Death is real! I don't know how much you have been around death, but it hurts! It's real, and its final!

When you see someone laying in a casket who has just died, it looks like they are sleeping. Like it's a cruel joke, like at any minute they could wake up. But death is real. Many times, I have been in the hospital when a member passed away, it's a difficult thing to deal with the death of loved one, when their family is close by.

As a pastor, you become familiar with death. Death is real. Death is final. Death has become very popular in our culture and our world today.

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

In American evangelicalism people who are in the church to talk about how they came to faith. "I asked Jesus into my heart." "I prayed the sinner's prayer." "I gave my heart to the Lord." "I made a decision to follow Jesus."

God's inerrant, inspired Word from Ephesians 2 teaches us how impossible that is. Spiritually speaking apart from God we are a lifeless dead corpse. It may have the appearance of life, but there is no life there. God's Word says: "**And you were dead in the trespasses and sins.**"

Which means 100% dead. Original sin dead! Total corruption of the individual dead. Ephesians 2 goes on and talks about how we were all by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

Apart from God we are dead corpses. As God's Word says sometimes we like to pretty up our corpses to make them look like whitewashed tombs, but inside we are full of bones. Dry bones. Dead bones.

So, what hope is there? There is no hope in us. There is no hope in our freewill, our decisions, and choices. Our only hope must come from outside of us. Outside of us! That's exactly where our hope comes from.

Our hope comes from a God who is rich in mercy. He gives us undeserved mercy. God not giving us what we deserve, because of our sin. Our sinful state, the sin that we inherited from our parents, and the sins we actually commit. What we deserve is eternal separation from God.

⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved.

There is the essence of the gospel. This is God's method of operation. What God does with dead things--He brings them to life. God who is rich in mercy, even though we are poor miserable sinners.

Romans 5:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God takes us who are dead in our trespasses and sins, and he makes us alive. He gives us the pattern for how life can come out of death. God send his Son Jesus into this sin filled world.

The second person of the trinity, the eternal Word, who takes on flesh and blood, and dwells inside of the womb of the blessed virgin Mary. He is born without spot or stain or blemish, or sin. He is born into this world of sin. Jesus does not sin even once, not in thought, not in Word, not in deed.

He places himself under the Law, the Law that condemns all of us. Jesus keeps it perfectly, he fulfills the law for you, and me, and the whole world. The wages of sin is death. Jesus didn't sin—he didn't have to die.

Jesus who is rich in mercy, takes your sin and my sin, he takes all the sin of all people for all time into himself, suffering, bleeding, and dying the death we deserve on Calvary's Cross. The innocent for the guilty.

We can't go back in time 2000 years and be there at Good Friday. So, God who is rich in mercy brings Good Friday, and Easter Resurrection to us, he delivers the deliverance to us. He does it at the baptismal font.

Romans 6:3, 5 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

It is at the baptismal font where God brought you from death, to life. Life in Jesus Christ. You didn't have to earn it, or pay for it. Pure Gift! Because that is the nature of our gift giving God. The God who gives us Jesus.

The God who gives us faith to believe that what Jesus has done for the whole world, he has done for you!

Brothers and sisters in Christ. How easy it is to stray off track, and to somehow think that what we do, what we say, what we pray somehow earns our forgiveness, and salvation, or completes what God has started.

No, we were dead! A dead corpse—a spiritually dead person like you are me can do nothing to earn or achieve or accomplish our salvation. God does it all for us!

Our text contains the great rallying cry of the reformation. Verses 8-9: **⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

If our salvation was left up to us, even a tiny little bit, what would we do? We would brag, we would boast, we would pat ourselves on the back because we're such great people. And in so doing, Christ is left out of the equation.

His life, his death, his victory over death and the grave. Today we can celebrate! We were dead in the trespasses of our sins, but God who is rich in grace, **⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.**

Alive. Hearing the Word of God, feasting on Christ's body and blood. Alive. Living in the vocation, the calling that God has given you, the good works that he has prepared in advance for you.

This is who we are in Christ Jesus. This is our new identity. We hear the Word of God and the freedom we have in the forgiveness of sins. We want to be the best son, daughter, husband, wife, parent, grandparent, employer, employee, church member, citizen, neighbor.

We want to be the best we can be--in love and service to God and our neighbor. There are perhaps no verses in Scripture that picture the life of a Christian better than these 10 verses in Ephesians 2, Its pure gift from death to life--pure gift.

Confidence in the forgiveness of sins on account of the completed work of Jesus. Pure gift. Faith in Jesus. Pure gift. Love toward God and service toward one another Pure gift. Thanks be to God for the gifts he gives us. Freely, generously, and without limit!

God said to His beloved Son, its time to have compassion. Then go bright jewel of my crown, and bring to all salvation. From sin and sorrow, set them free. Slay bitter death for them, that they may live with you forever.

May God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.