

"The Walking Dead – No More"
Ephesians 2:1-10

March 11, 2018

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

A wildly popular television show the past eight years has been a program called, "The Walking Dead." Since it's a scary show about zombies who stagger about, devouring the non-zombies, it may not be your cup of tea. However, I'm sure your children or your grandchildren love it and watch it faithfully.

This show has a slightly different take on this kind of program and its summed up by the title the "walking dead". The premise is that, due to some unknown or unmentioned catastrophe, when people die, they suddenly reanimate. By that, I mean they get up, move about, walking (in a staggering sort of way). They can see things, chase after the humans in the show to get the food they need, and do many things which people who are alive do. However, no one would ever mistake these creatures as being alive. I'm sure the creatures don't even know they are not alive. They simply move around in order to satisfy their wants and their needs. Not only do they behave bizarrely, but, since they are dead, their bodies are decomposing and falling apart while they move about.

No one on the show seriously regards this horrible condition as a curable illness or a correctable disability, although some have tried. In one episode, when a farmer locks up his wife and several family members and friends who have this condition, in the barn, until a cure is found, the rest of the people are horrified and say, "There is no cure. They are dead."

It is a dire situation in that post-apocalyptic time. More and more people join the ranks of the walking dead. The "walkers", as the humans on the show refer to them, are busy trying to devour the living and the living seek to kill the walkers. There is no hope of change to the situation or a cure for the disease. People are simply trying to survive, often without much luck.

Now before you think your pastor is crazy or seriously question what he is watching on TV, hear me out. I thought of this program as I read our epistle for today from the book of Ephesians, especially where St. Paul writes, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked." I found that the meaning for the Greek word "death" does not refer so much to the event of dying, but the results of dying. In other words, it can be translated as "corpse". So, what St. Paul is really saying, first to the Gentiles in verse one, and later on to the Jews in verse five, and even to us today, "you were all corpses walking." You were all the "walking dead".

God created us for life, life with Him and with each other. However, sin – our deliberate disregard for and rebellion against God's law – brings death to us and severs our relationship with God. Sin is a serious problem, although we don't seem to take it very seriously. Like the walkers (what the characters call those afflicted) on the show, we blithely move about but don't really live. We seek only to satisfy our needs

and desires, while being dead at the same time. Sin is corrupting us and destroying us, yet we don't seem to care. We think sin isn't all that bad, a few stumbling's or missteps here and there. We tend to think that sin, especially our sin, as merely a blemish on us which can be easily covered or removed without much problem.

The fact of the matter is sin is ugly and the death which sin causes makes us ugly before God. Sin also corrupts and eventually destroys us. Rather than seeing ourselves as basically good people with a few flaws and blemishes, we should see ourselves and our spiritual appearances as being more like one of the "walkers" (as the TV show refers to them as) which have their skin decaying, various body parts falling off, and various internal organs being yanked off. If you find that repulsive and horrific (and I think you should), then realize that this is how you appear to God and probably even worse.

As there is no way to make this look better, there is also no way to cure this condition. As it is laughable and impossible to think of curing and restoring one of the walkers on the TV program, so it is even more laughable and impossible to think that the situation of our sin can be removed or that our ugly, corrupt, and riding souls can be fixed by anything that we do.

Simply put, there is no cure for sin, no way to stop the corruption, no way to prevent death, and no way to restore life to a person in that situation, either on the "The Walking Dead" TV show or in real life. It is a very dire situation from which we cannot free ourselves. St. Paul says that we are following the "Prince of the power of the air" namely Satan. We have walked in the ways of this world, St. Paul writes. We indulge the passions of our flesh. We carry out the desires of our body and mind. We are by nature children of wrath. God is angry at us. We can do nothing to change that. Like the scenario for the television show presents, we live in a very dire situation.. People are walking around dead and not even knowing it. People mistake what we experience here in the world as the life which God intends for us to have without knowing it is not even close. There is nothing we can do. But there is a lot which God can and has done for you with me.

Anger, fear, and hatred are the normal reactions to the "walking dead" on the television program. We have that same reaction to sinners, especially those who have heard us in some way. One would think that a perfect and holy God, although not fearful, would have anger and hatred for the spiritually dead who were walking about in trespasses and sins. However, that's not the case. Paul writes that God is rich in mercy toward us in our disgusting condition. He has great love for us and all while we were dead in trespasses. God's love moved him to have compassion upon us. His rich mercy moved him to act on our behalf to save us from this horrible situation of being walking dead.

As our Gospel lesson for today notes, God gave His only Son to take care of the situation. Jesus did not come into this world to condemn the world. In other words, He does not deal with the situation as they do with the walking dead on the television

program: kill as many of them as they can. No, Jesus came to save the world from the death of sin and give to us true life.

The tremendously ironic part of this whole situation is that Jesus overcomes death by dying Himself. As Moses lifted up a bronze serpent on a pole in the wilderness to save the people from the death caused by poisonous snakes, so did God the Father have His Son lifted up on a cross on Golgotha to save all people from the death, both temporal and eternal, caused by sin. Three days later God lifted up Jesus from death and the grave to life once again.

God has made a promise that, what has happened to His Son, will also happen to those who are joined to Him. In our baptism, He kept that promise. We were baptized into Christ Jesus. That means whatever is Jesus', is also ours. In other words, Jesus has died the death for sin. That means that we also have died the death of sin. Jesus was made alive from the horribleness of death, never to die again. This means that we, also, had been made alive from the horror of death, never to die eternally.

We are no longer the "walking dead". We have become the "walking alive". We are no longer horrible and disgusting spiritual corpses, decaying and corrupt, who move about and seek only that which we need or desire. We are alive – truly alive. We did not choose this or make it happen in any way at all, any more than a physical corpse could choose life or make himself alive. God made us alive. He saved us by grace. We receive that life, that salvation, and that grace by faith which itself is a gift from God. Therefore, none of us can feel proud or boast about our status as the "walking alive" people that we are.

We now have true life in the way which God intended for it to be and not just and not just the mindless moving about to satisfy passions and urges while living only for the present. God has created us and given us life for a purpose which is beyond us and beyond the present moment. As Paul writes, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." We no longer move about aimlessly, but with the purpose. We live, not to satisfy only ourselves, but to do good for our neighbor.. Following in our Lord Jesus Christ's footsteps, we live to serve and serve to live.

Lest we think this is too hard and that we must devise our "good works to do list" which we then must struggle to tick off the items on that list, we rejoice in the fact that the God who created us, who gave us life, and who saved us, is the one who prepares the good works for us to do before hand.. This means you don't have to go out looking for good works to do. They will come to you. The good works which God creates for you to do will be different than the good works which God creates for me to do and vice versa.

And how are we to view these good works which God prepares for us to do? Shall we pick and choose those good works which we want to do or which are convenient for us to do in a a designated time for good works doing? No! Paul says that God has prepared good works for us to do that we should walk in them. We are no longer to walk in sin and allow that to consume us and take our time. Instead we are to

walk in good works, that is, live in them. Being the “walking alive, means to walk and good works and do them all the time. That is true life.

So, setting aside all disgusting television shows with gory special effects and sad and hopeless plot lines, let us remember who we are, how we got here, and where we are going to. We are no longer the “walking dead” who only move about and never really live and who act only for themselves. We have been rescued from sin and death. We have been given new life, new priorities, and a new purpose through the life, death, and especially the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although I doubt that anyone would ever make a television show about this, nevertheless, we are to “walking alive.”
Amen