

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Over the past few weeks, we've been looking at the Triune God whom we believe in. We talked about the first person of the Trinity, the Father, who created us as the crown of his creation and still preserves and sustains us. We talked about the Son, how he redeemed us, bought us back with his holy precious blood, and who now rules over us and for us from his heavenly throne.

This morning, we're going to focus on the third person of our Triune God, the one who's often in the shadows, working behind the scenes, but no less important. The Holy Spirit. I believe in God the Holy Spirit. He makes the dead alive.

Can you picture that? The dead being made alive? What does that look like in your mind because, believe it or not, that has happened to every single one of you.

But maybe before we can see that picture, we should go back and see the picture of how we used to be. I can help add to that picture by sharing with you again some of the words of the apostle Paul this morning, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts..."

What picture do those words put in your head? Can I tell you what I see? I see a scary picture. I see zombies. Right? The walking dead? The living dead? You and me?

That's right, at one time, we were like zombies. Can you see how we were? We were dead, spiritually, but physically, we were alive. Oh yeah, we walked around, ate drank, slept, went about business as usual.

Except it wasn't. It wasn't business as usual, because even though everything on the outside looked fine, inside it wasn't. ON the inside, we were dead. Spiritually, we were dead. Dead in our transgressions and our sins.

You want to know what that looked like? Well, just like a zombie. You know, zombies don't care how their actions affect anyone else. They only think about themselves, and they live to satisfy their own desires. That's exactly what Paul is saying in our verses when he writes about you and me, "You followed the ways of this world...all of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following ITS desires and thoughts..."

You see, when it came down to what God wanted from you and me and what our sinful nature wanted, the sinful nature won every time. A selfish, greedy attitude. That when God commands you and me to put him first. Did we? What about when the ways of the world look so much more desirable, the world which tells us we're the boss, we're number one, what we want goes?

At one time, we didn't even give a second thought to God. It was just me, myself, and I. A greedy, selfish sinful nature which evidenced itself by the lies I spoke, the hateful things I said, the hurtful actions I took, all part of our blatant disregard for God because, of course, that's what I wanted to do.

But because we followed the world, our sinful natures, and the real ruler behind both of them, the ruler of the kingdom of the air, that is, the devil, we were objects of wrath, not just because our disobedience made God angry with us, but because a life of constantly gratifying our own sinful natures to the neglect of God and his commands should have incurred the ultimate wrath of God on us, being cast off into the fires of hell to spend an eternity there.

And you know, the logical question would be, why didn't we do anything about it? Why didn't we do what was pleasing to God, do what's right, especially knowing we were objects of God's wrath? The Bible tells us the reason why we couldn't. It says, "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so."

You see, not only were we by nature hostile to God, enemies of him, meaning that our sinful natures had not the even slightest want or desire to do what God wants us to do. But because even if there had been the possibility of us doing what was pleasing to God, we wouldn't have even been able to. Because we were dead. Spiritually dead.

And you know how much power a dead corpse has to do anything? To eat? To dress itself? To walk around? To work? It doesn't. A dead corpse can't do anything except lie there and be dead. And that's what you and I were spiritually. Dead. Unable to live according to God's will, nothing in us that was able to do anything God wants us to. Being spiritually dead, we were objects of wrath, destined for hell.

"As for you, you were dead." You were dead. We were dead. WERE dead. You know, it's good to go back and to look at our past, at what each one of us was at one time. Zombies. Dead, spiritually dead.

Because, thankfully, that's not what we are anymore. The apostle Paul, this morning, tells us what we are instead, "God made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved."

It is by grace you have been saved. Saved from sin. Saved from Satan. Saved from being dead, from being a spiritual zombie. And what was it that saved you and me? Grace. Do you know what grace is? Here's an easy way to remember what grace is, a little pneumonic device. G.R.A.C.E. God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Because that's exactly what grace is, the riches of God's love, made ours at Christ's expense.

When we were dead in our transgressions and sins, there was an expense needed to be paid to bring us back to life. Do you know what that expense was? It was another life. And not just any other life, but the life of the Son of God. A life that was perfect because that's how the Son of God lived here on earth, perfectly, without sin, without being spiritually dead, like we are.

But for us to be saved, the payment of his life needed to be made, and Jesus did, when he offered his life on the cross for us, his precious gift to us, free of charge. Jesus died, taking all our sins, so we could be forgiven.

And then he rose, the first to come back to life, victorious over sin, the devil, and death. As a result of Jesus' resurrection, we no longer have to face death, eternal death.

That's why you and I were saved. Grace. God's Riches At Christ's Expense. God's amazing gift of love given to us, undeserved, yet a free gift of our sins forgiven through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Now, the last person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. How does he fit in here? Well, he's the answer to how that grace saved us, how it became ours. He's the one who makes the dead alive. He's the one who's made you and me alive.

Do you know how he did? "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith..." Through faith. That's how God's grace became ours. Through faith.

And you know who creates faith? The Holy Spirit does. Isn't that what Jesus meant in the gospel for this morning when he said, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit (capital S, the Holy Spirit) gives birth to spirit (lower-case s, our spirit, our faith)."

That second birth, for many of us, came at our baptisms, when the water, poured on our heads, and then the very words of God, spoken, the words of the gospel, and the Holy Spirit worked through that, creating saving faith in us. Or for others, maybe it was outside of baptism, but that same second birth, worked in you by the same Holy Spirit, who worked through the same word of God, the gospel, to make you alive.

We have been made alive because the Holy Spirit has given us the gift of faith in Jesus as our Savior. He's given us faith, that new life in Christ, where we are no longer zombies, only seeking to satisfy our own desires. But a new man, a new life, made again to be what God originally created us to be, God's workmanship, his work of art, the crown of his creation.

But even more than that, that faith, that new life in us, no longer wanting to serve ourselves, but to serve God, to live lives of thankfulness for the incredible sacrifice of love made by Jesus, our Savior, so we could be forgiven, so we could have eternal life in heaven.

So, back to our original question...can you picture it? The dead being made alive? You really don't have to try to picture it. Just look around you. That miracle has already taken place inside each of you. You are not zombies. You are not spiritually dead. No, you have been saved by grace. You have been saved through faith in Jesus. You have been made alive by the Holy Spirit. And now we live, as God's workmanship, and we will, all the days of our lives. Amen.

We were therefore buried with Jesus Christ through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Amen.