

In case you hadn't noticed, zombies and vampires and other “walking dead” things are very “in” these days. We are overrun with “walking dead” in our movies, on TV, in music, and in books. The walking dead are everywhere, and in great numbers, seemingly waiting to steal our soul or steal our children or just to chow down on us.



Because of this “walking dead” epidemic, our young seem to be in touch in a metaphorical way with a spiritual reality: there really ARE walking dead among us. But our young prefer the walking dead to be easy to spot. Our new Kindergarten primer might read, “Look, zombie; see Dick run. Run Jane, run.”

Maybe we should be pleased our children are aware on this level because walking dead people ARE appearing among them in real life and doing them harm. But that's a topic for another day. Today, I want to think about who those “walking dead” are among us, spiritually speaking, and what to do about them.

The root of the problem is sin. When we choose to live a life of sin, we become, the Apostle Paul said, like the “walking dead.” We heard Paul's thesis about the “walking dead” in our epistle lesson today:

“You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient.”

You heard it: according to Paul, WE—each of us—were once among the “walking dead.” He said what made us that way was following the wrong set of operating instructions for this life, using the death-eaters' plan of existence: “all for me,” or just shambling from one day to the next awaiting annihilation. Of course, Paul said all this another way; Paul said, “We followed ... the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.”

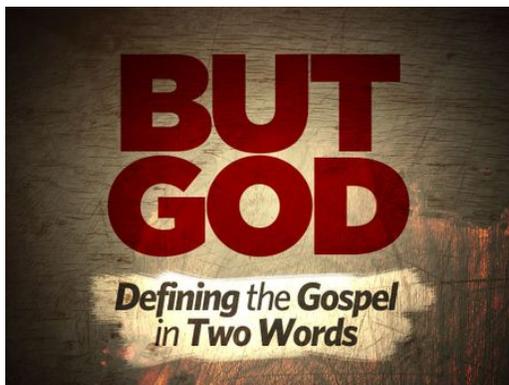
Not a pretty picture, is it? Life is a treasure, a gift, too precious to waste. But when we act as if God doesn't exist, when we live for ourselves alone, we join the ranks of the living dead, the walking dead. Those who are in this state of denial about God tell themselves that what we see is what we get, that this is all there is to life, that only annihilation awaits us after death.

But annihilation does NOT await us after we die. That's a lie, one designed to convince us we might as well live all for ourselves now. Truth is, what awaits us after we die is life in a different mode.

I hope you are here today because you have chosen life. We who have chosen life are no longer walking dead, no longer dead to life, but dead only to sin. Paul said, “We are what [God] has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”

But our good works don't “save us.” I expect we are all counting heavily on God's mercy. We hope, we pray, that God's mercy will trump God's judgment, that those who deny God in this life will get another chance, somehow. But all that is up to God, who has delegated judgment to Christ Jesus; we don't get to set the criteria! All we can know for sure is that we can act now, we can choose life now, while we are alive here, and trust God about what comes next.

Paul says that God has *already* “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” In other words, God “took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ,” as Eugene Peterson's paraphrase *The Message* says. And—*The Message* continues, “Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea and all his work; all we do is trust him enough to let him do it.”



There you have the answer, the “solution” to our “walking dead” problem. The two words which sum up that answer are, “**But God.**” That's what Paul says today, “**But God**, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our sins, made us alive together with Christ...”

Despite our bad choices here in this life, God acted. All we need do is to trust: trust that God exists, trust that God loves us, and trust that God could and did and will act on our behalf.

Isn't trust what we have been up to, individually? Haven't we had faith that God loves us, even when unthinkable things happen to us and those we love? Haven't we had faith that God has worked things

out, even when we didn't understand the whys and the why me? Don't we had faith that *in the end* something other than annihilation awaits us?

And haven't we as Church of the Resurrection always put our faith in God? Haven't we had faith that God is at work in our world, and wants us to help with that work, even when we see “walking death” all around us? Haven't we acted in faith *throughout our 54 years as a church* to bring life-giving realities into existence and help people who are among the walking dead find life and hope? And aren't we acting in faith that God will send someone else after us to continue the work begin through us?

In the meanwhile, the walking dead among us need love, in the name of Christ Jesus. But they also need to hear our story. The walking dead need to know that we, too, were once dead, but now we live. They need to know that rejecting death and choosing life, that trusting in God for that life, is all that we need.