

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Pentecost 4 Series A June 8, 2008 **Romans 5:6-8**



You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us.

This is God's Word!

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

There was a soldier from Pennsylvania in Iraq. A soldier from Pennsylvania – just 19 years old – a private first class – named Ross McGinnis. Private McGinnis was riding in the gunner's hatch of a Hummer – when a grenade sailed past him and into the truck – where four other soldiers sat. They say – instinct would be – to jump out of the Hummer – to save your self. In an instant – realizing the grenade is about to explode – jump as far as you can – as fast as you can – to save your self! But that's not what Private McGinnis did. He cried out a warning to his friends inside. And then – seeing that the grenade was stuck near the Hummer's radio – he jumped inside – covering the grenade with his own body – giving up his life – to save his friends! It is understandable – don't you think – to give up your life to try and save someone you love? To save our spouse – to save our child – to save our grandchild? We would do it! In a tornado – we would cover them up with our body. In a fire we would carry them through the flames. In the face of terrorists or murderers or thieves – we would shield them with our body – to try to protect them. But the wondrous miracle of Jesus' love is this – he died for his enemies. Jesus died to save wretched sinners like me and like you. This 4th Sunday after Pentecost we worship – we thank and praise our Savior and Redeemer--

Jesus Died For The Ungodly!

- 1. Jesus died at just the right time**
- 2. Jesus died while we were still sinners.**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on – is part of the Apostle Paul's letter to the believers in the city of Rome. *The People's Bible Commentary on Romans* was written by Prof. Armin Panning. Prof. Panning taught Greek – the language God chose to write down the Scriptures of the New Testament. Why would that be? Perhaps because there has never been a language before or since – that is more precise. Built into the Greek language are prefixes – one and two and three letter verbal Legos and all kinds of suffixes – verbal Legos that connect to the end of words – there are built into verbs all kinds of endings – so you can make clear and certain – what you mean. You build into words who did it and when they did it and even why they did it – or the fact that the result of what they did – goes on and on. You can build into the word – the fact that what matters is what you did – not when you did it – but what you did. In Greek there are all kinds of little words just two and three letters – the littlest words that are like little crumbles of blue cheese – they flavor the meaning – why you did it or when you did it or

where you did it. Sometimes the smallest words are far more important than the really big words. The fact is – when people say – the Bible has been translated and translated and translated – and so the meaning has changed again and again. Well, that’s just plain wrong. Part of what makes our *walking together – worker training system* such a blessing – is the fact our pastors and professors can take the original texts – painstakingly copied – and translate them – from Hebrew – from Greek – into English. We have God’s Word – inspired – inerrant – effective. You can bet your immortal soul and eternity on God’s Word because God’s Word is God’s truth!

May 25th – Memorial Day weekend – we started reading here in Church – from Romans. And with Jesus’ permission we will keep reading through Romans – for 16 weeks in a row. With Jesus’ permission we will keep reading from Romans – the Sunday after Labor Day – after School has started again – on September 7th – Grandparents Day – we will be reading from Romans. It would be a blessing to your faith – if you would read all of Romans – not just the few verses we are reading here in Church. Some of the most practical verses are in Romans. Paul talked about the very same sins that threaten America. How sad to think of the fall of Rome and the danger to our country when you read from Romans chapter one. **Because of this – that is people trying to ignore God and explain him away – God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil. They disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. Romans 1:26-32.** Did you notice how many of those words describe attitude – a bad attitude? Did you notice how many of those words describe anger – rage – arguing and fighting? Did you notice how many of those sins can infect a marriage and destroy a family? The same dangers that brought down Rome threaten our lives and our country!

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. At just the right time... The older you get the more you realize – timing is everything! Too early is not good... Too late is not good. We had a pizza the other day – that was taken out of the oven – the stone hearth oven too late. The cheese was good. The sausage and mushrooms were good. But the bottom of the crust was black and bitter and charcoal. It was in a word – inedible! Timing is everything. At just the right time – God’s plan to rescue us was set in action. Most certainly not the way we would have done it. Baby Jesus was born in the little town of Bethlehem. That was according to God’s plan – promised through the prophet Micah – more than 400 years before the fact – Bethlehem would be where Jesus would be born. Not in a hospital with Winnie the Pooh wall paper – not in little blue jammies with feet in them – not with little socks on his hands so his sharp fingernails wouldn’t cut his face. Not with a little mint green stocking hat on his head – but wrapped in swaddling clothes and set in a manger – an animal feed box – rested the King of kings and Lord of lords! **When we were still**

powerless... The Greek word for powerless is asthenas. Asthenas means weak – powerless – helpless! Nobody likes to admit that. Nobody likes to admit that they can't help them self. When we are very little – we don't want someone scooping our strained prunes with tapioca into our mouth with one of those spoons with the soft coating. I can do that myself. And with our pudgy little fingers we grab a fist full of prunes and mush it into our face. We don't want someone putting our clothes on us. We don't want someone putting our shoes on us. I can do that myself! And we mush the wrong shoes on the wrong feet. I can do that myself! When we are bigger – it's still the same. I can drive myself. I can pay myself. Powerless? Not me. I can quit drinking – any time I want! I'm not too drunk to drive! Give me my keys. I can take care of myself! And we can't. We are powerless to save our self. Only Jesus could save us and only Jesus did. Jesus forgives all our sins. Jesus makes us strong against temptation. And Jesus forgives us when we fail again and again!

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us. Jesus took all our sins away. That changes everything. The first thing it changes is our heart – our attitude! I heard the other day about a guy who tried to find the happiest place on earth – the happiest people in the happiest country. It seemed to him that some of the very happiest people in the whole world were people from Iceland. Iceland? Surely that's not because the weather is so nice! How many nice warm sunny days can you have in a place called Iceland? There were many happy people in Denmark and Switzerland. Why would that be? Because they are the home of the prune Danish sweet rolls – the home of really dependable wrist watches and those nifty little army knives – with a cork screw and a little scissors for when you get that little piece of skin next to your fingernail? He found out that people in Nigeria are among the happiest people in the whole world! Why would that be? It can't be because of things and stuff – when people don't own a single pair of shoes. Where people breathe air you can see – that's so polluted by oil being refined and car exhaust that it makes your eyes burn and your chest hurt breathing and people eat rodents. Happiness isn't tied to things and stuff – when our country is rated 17th on the happiness scale – even though people are earning 3 times the money they were making when I was born. Oh, they say we are unhappy because of long commutes to work and lots of work to be done. Our happiness hasn't be tied to how much money we make. And our happiness can't be spoiled by time spent in the car – listening to our I-pod on the way to work. And work – hard work – can be so rewarding – and fulfilling – it is a gift and blessing from God. Happiness – joy and contentment and thankfulness fill your heart and color your life – when you know Jesus is watching over you! Contentment comes from knowing – **all things work together for good to those who love God.** Contentment comes from knowing – **nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus!**

While we were still sinners Christ died for us. That changes eternity! I read about this man named Fred. Fred died in Cincinnati the other day – 89 years old. Fred is the guy who invented that nifty little cardboard tube – where they put all those potato chips – made from little potato puff paste. Those tubes with the little plastic lid on one end. You open that end – and the chips – each identical to the last – come sliding out. Well, Fred designed that aluminum coated tube with the little face with the moustache on the outside. Like I said – Fred died the other day. He had his earthly body reduced to the dust and ashes it ultimately came from. And then Fred had some of his ashes put into one of those *Pringles* packages. That was part of Fred's final wishes. And you know what – it doesn't really matter. It doesn't really matter what

happens to our dust and ashes. Come Judgment Day – Jesus – who died and rose again to save us – will put us back together again – to spend eternity safe with him. Jesus has that power. Jesus has that authority!

While we were still sinners Christ died for us. God's Word says *God is love*. Jesus loves us and died and rose again to save us. That's what Jesus does. They showed two little boys on the news the other day. One little boy was 5. His friend was 6. The little boy who was five fell into a swimming pool – fell into the deep end and sank like a rock to the bottom. His friend saw him there on the bottom – jumped in – swam to the bottom and grabbed hold of his friend by the arm with his one hand – and swam to the top with his other hand. When they got to the surface – he pulled his friend out of the water on to the side. "That's what you do for your friend!", he said. "That's what you do for your friend!" Jesus is our friend. Jesus is our brother and our Savior and our Redeemer. Jesus died and rose again to save us. That's what you do for your sheep. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz