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Ephesians 2:1-10 – *The Gospel...One Last Time*

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Ephesians 2:1-10

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in 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. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

Since my time began here at Trinity...

I’ve tried to make my work about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The good news concerning Jesus Christ that has tremendous impact on us.

This is after all what we do—

Not just as ministers of the Word (fancy term for pastor in the CRC)—

But as the Church.

As God’s people we witness to what God has done in our lives...

And what God is doing in the world.

As God’s representatives in this world...

The primary task—

The most important call—

Of the church is to announce the gospel to the world.

So that's what we'll be doing this morning...

One last time for me and you together.

And this morning we're going to use the lens of:

Sin, Salvation, Service.

Or Guilt, Grace, Gratitude.

Let's start with sin.

Paul says:

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...” (2:1)

What does it mean to be *dead*?

As you think of loved ones who have gone before you—

Laying down in their casket as you prepare to lay them to rest—

What does it mean for them to be dead?

Are they doing a whole lot?

If you talk to them, do they talk back?

If you pinch them, do they pull away from you?

No!

They're unresponsive.

Not just a little unresponsive either...

They are completely unresponsive.

In catechism class with the grades 11-12 we explain it like this:

Imagine you walk into Stantec Tower downtown...

That's the highest building on the skyline in Edmonton.

Picture yourself taking the elevator to the first floor...

The mezzanine level.

You decide to hop over the glass and land on the floor...

One story down.

What happens?

You probably break your ankles or legs...

Maybe you end up with a concussion if you fall the wrong way.

But you're just injured.

You're still alive...

You're still able to respond...

To call for help or maybe drag yourself to the nearest hospital.

Now imagine that you took the elevator to the top of Stantec Tower—

66 floors up—

And you jumped from the roof.

What happens now?

Well, you probably bounce a little bit after hitting the concrete below.

You probably break nearly all of your bones...

Puncture your lungs...

And turn your brain to mush.

Are you able to get up and ask for help?

If someone was walking by and said, "Are you okay?! ...

Would you be able to respond?

No!

You're dead!

This is what it means to be dead.

You are unresponsive in the fullest sense of the word:

You are unresponsive to God's call to righteousness;

You are unresponsive when God calls you to turn from your sin and follow him;

You are stuck in a life of transgression against God...

And you are unable to do anything about it.

And your sin and transgression earn for you separation from God...

You are cut off from God...

And deserving of punishment.

As I've heard it said here so many times over the last 5 years:

“You're hooped.”

“All of us,” Paul says, are hooped.

But!

If you like big butts...

This is about as big as they come.

“But,” Paul says, “because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—” (2:4)

In other words, Salvation!

You were dead in your sins—

Unresponsive to God and unable to do anything about it—

But! God made you alive in Christ.

God saw that we were dead...

So he sent Jesus Christ, God the Son, to rescue us...

To revive us.

Jesus Christ, who had no sin, was made to be sin for us—

He took our sin upon himself...

Giving his life on the torture instrument of the cross—

So that in him, we might become the righteousness of God.

In Christ, we stand holy, right, and accepted before God.

Salvation!

Saved from our sin.

Saved from God's wrath.

Saved from a spiritual and physical death.

Any why does God do this for us?

Why does God make us alive even when we're dead in our sins?

So that God can demonstrate his grace.

So that God might reveal to us who he is:

A merciful God...

Not giving us the punishment we deserve.

A loving God...

Who seeks out a people turned against him.

Like the wife who loves her husband again and again...

Even when he is unfaithful to her again and again.

You just want to shake her and say "Why?! Give him up!"

It's Love!

It's because she loves him and is committed to him.

It's because God loves us and is committed to us.

Sin, Salvation...

And finally, Service.

We do not do anything to deserve God's gift of resurrection.

We cannot earn it.

And we cannot work hard enough for it...

Remember we're dead...

And dead people can't do anything.

So where/how do good works fit in?

If they don't get us into heaven or earn God's favor...

Then what's the deal with them?

Gratitude.

It's our response of thanksgiving for all God has done.

It's our "thank you" for God's mercy and grace toward us.

And yet, we can't even take credit for these!

These too are attributed to God:

"...Good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (2:10)

Sin, Salvation, and living a lifetime of service...

Empowered by God's Holy Spirit.

I'd like to spend the last couple minutes with you...

Sharing where we've seen the Lord using you over our 5-year stay.

So, Kristi come on up.

This is where we've seen your faithful responses to God's grace:

1. 6 months into our time here at Trinity, Rich and Patsy got the call about Rachel's brain-bleed in Thailand. I went to Lacombe for a Classis meeting the morning after everyone was notified and received a call from Gerald Vandermeer. He said, "I think we should have a prayer meeting. We need to get together and pray." This is when I first realized how close, caring and committed to prayer this congregation is.
2. **We saw** it in your response to the American family who got into a fatal car accident on the road between Banff and Jasper. We somehow had a distant connection to the family and were able to minister to them in their need. You provided the family with a pack n play for the 1-year-old who survived the crash, a car to use, clothes, food, and blanketed them in prayer.
3. We saw the same thing with Joanne Thys, when we had a prayer sign up and people were praying around the clock. I talked to Harold months after and he was still eating food that the people of Trinity had brought over.
4. **During** covid, George and Edith Houtstra delivered treat packages to all of the kids of the church.
5. **During** covid, people delivered meals and groceries to those who were in isolation.
6. **During** covid people set up special drive through celebrations for Mother's Day, Father's Day, and graduation.
7. We saw it during the good work that was done through the Renewal Lab – 13 people committing to serve on the team for 2 years and seeking out God's will for Trinity. You prayed, asked the community what they needed, held potlucks for a time to remember, and discerned God's Spirit as he moved in this place.
8. The men and women who served as elders and deacons, discerning God's will for the church. All 5 years I served were years of consensus, encouragement, respect, and grace.
9. 5 years of the Wallishs providing flowers for the women on Mother's Day.
10. **The** Christmas hampers that were filled by the deacons and delivered to those in need.
11. **The** many items you dropped off for the Mosaic Centre and the financial gifts you offered as well.
12. **The** youth serving in nursery and wee-worship.
13. **Marriage** Ministry watching all of the kids so parents could have a date night.

14. Art VanLoo, stepping up and teaching catechism class with me when he had never done it before.
15. Hennie Schenk, always having a smile and friendly welcome for people coming into the office no matter what day, time, or situation.
16. Frank and Carolyn VanBoom, and their crew teaching people in the community about gardening.
17. Christine and Blair Montpelliler, Pastor Hilary, Carolyn and Frank, Renee VanBoom, Rita Snyder, Matthias Devries, Bryan and Lindsay VanBoom, Brian Woudstra, George and Edith, and everyone else who is involved in welcoming in kids from the neighborhood to Community Corner.
18. Pastor Hilary always having kids from the neighborhood looking for her at the church. And Hilary handing out popsicles and ice cream in the summer to them.
19. **The seniors** covering the church, their families, the government and our world with prayer.
20. **The baptisms** and professions and faith over the last 5 years that points to the faithfulness of God's people to raise up children to know the Lord.
21. The numerous funerals of faithful saints who passed away in the Lord—funerals that were a delight and encouraging to attend because of the confidence displayed. Especially singing "Ere Si God."
22. Being open to Fresh Routes using our building to provide a place for food to be purchased at a reduced rate. It never quite took off, but we were willing to make our space available.
23. Opening our space to the Mosaic Centre when they were in-between buildings.
24. **The many** 50 and 60+ years of marriage anniversaries that serve as a model to those inside and outside of the church of God's faithfulness...not to mention the cake!
25. Mike Hale and his decades of service for the Cadets.
26. Cadet Sunday and the generations of Cadet boys and men singing *Living for Jesus*.
27. **Suzi Jorritsma** greeting everyone with a smile during announcements.
28. **Following** and supporting George and Toni Fernhout as they worked around the world with World Renew.
29. **Ted Schenk**, Deanna Bulsink (now Ryks), and the team that biked across Canada raising money for World Renew.
30. Frank VanBoom and his auto/evangelism shop.
31. The supplies that were donated for the flooding in BC.
32. I'm never going to complain about seat cushions and "assigned seats" again. Because over the last 5 years I saw seniors so faithful to the Lord and his church that they had seat cushions that stayed on the pews. This was their way of saying, "I'll be back." And each and every Sunday you do come back.
33. **The many** volunteers that stood out in the cold for the Advent Luminary Walk. We didn't see as many people from our neighborhood as we hoped for, but instead it turned out to be a blessing to gather together as a church.
34. **Rita, Shirley** Goutbeck, Tina Eppinga, and the many people who have helped with providing food for funerals, to help comfort grieving families in their time of need.

35. Tom and Tina Eppinga getting us in the Thanksgiving spirit by setting up their display in the foyer.
36. Marg and Jim, John and Joyce, and Will and Lola setting up for Christmas...especially that massive Christmas tree they manage to get up.
37. **The fun**-raising committee putting on the Christmas auction and the brief time we got to participate at the Elks concession stand.
38. **All of the** musicians who have shared their gifts with us Sunday after Sunday, and the volunteers for our sound and projection booth.
39. **Case Schenk** and Ryan VanNiejenhuis laboring to get us up and running with livestream during covid.
40. The youth Christmas drama every Christmas Eve, where we got to see budding talent, and kids shine as they told the story of Christ's birth.

There are so many ways that we've witnessed your "service" or "gratitude" ...

So many ways that we've seen the Lord working through you.

For us personally, we've experienced your response to God's grace:

1. **When we first moved to Edmonton and were looking for a house, Trish Vandermeer** come back from her summer holiday camping to be our realtor, and Tony coming over to help out with the inspection.
2. When we moved into our house, a team of people were there waiting to help us unload and set up.
3. A number of people, especially Harold Thys and Don Goutbeck, helped us make a lot of initial updates laying a new floor throughout our house and helping us with landscaping.
4. **When our house** had trouble with the paint, Andrew and Fran Wolhuis let us stay with them...with our dog...for a couple of weeks. And then when we first found out about our twins and were freaking out, they listened to us and helped calm us down.
5. **When** we had our first set of twins, so many people stayed overnight to give us some rest. Not only that but you made us many delicious meals and Ben Bentum even cut our grass.
6. George Houtstra is responsible for encouraging me to move away from the pulpit when preaching. He said, "You look like you just want to jump out from back there, why don't you try it." So I did, and it has felt comfortable.
7. **With o**ur second set of twins, again you were there for us. You again stayed overnight, watched our big girls, and made us meals.
8. **Seeing the** joy on our girls' faces as they got to play with your children, running around after Sunday worship.
9. This weekend when we moved out, again you were there for us. It's understandable when someone helps a pastor move in, but there's really nothing in it for God's

people when the pastor moves out. Yet you were there! Sweating and breaking your backs for us.

Kristi:

On the occasional Sundays where I would be up front here to sing or do announcements, I would comment after church to Michael how envious I was that he got to stand up here regularly. I'm not envious of the preaching and pastoral work he does — I'll leave that heavy lifting to him — but envious of his vantage point. He regularly gets to look out at all of you. And it's truly a beautiful sight. Standing here, I see a community of believers who love the Lord and love each other.

Over the last 5 years I've been privileged to get to know so many of you and hear parts of your stories. Whether we became close friends, served as volunteers together, shared a meal, or just exchanged pleasantries on Sunday mornings, I'm incredibly grateful for each and every one of you. Your testimonies are an encouragement and a light to me. You have faithfully held each other up and reminded each other of God's grace, mercy, and great love as you've walked through joys and heartaches, triumphs and struggles.

I've belonged to multiple church families in my life. But Trinity will forever hold a special place in my heart because here is where I became a mom. All four of my girls were born and baptized here at Trinity. And all of you have helped me find my footing as a parent and given me guidance in raising kind, thoughtful, loving kids who seek to know more about Jesus.

This whole week Matthew 5:14-16 kept coming to mind as I thought of Trinity:
 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

I encourage you to spread the love of Jesus in your homes, your workplaces, your neighborhoods, and your communities. Please keep reaching out to others and doing the most important work of sharing the gospel and enfolding people into the Church. You are a bright, shining light in this city.

10. Rich, you taught me what it is to be a pastor. When Rich washed my feet last week, that wasn't just an act, that was Rich's heart. The guy is a servant with a heart for God and God's people. I will never be at your level when it comes to shepherding God's people, but the congregation at MRC will be blessed because your heart for pastoral care has rubbed off on me a little. You have been so easy to work with and always Christ-centered. I will miss serving with you tremendously, and cannot say thank you enough for all I've gained from you.
11. For my other work colleagues, Hilary, Hennie, Jess, Lou, Dave and Diane, Cassie, Clarence, and Jen, it has been such a joy and gift working alongside you. Ministry is impossible without God's body, and you've encouraged me to walk and minister faithfully. Thank you for pouring into me over these last 5 years.

Trinity will always hold a special place for me personally...

Because so many firsts happened here:

My first call;

My first baptism;

My first wedding;

My first funeral;

My first set of twins...

And my second set.

You are a beautiful people...

A people who are committed and faithful to the Lord.

I am so thankful to you and to the Lord for bringing us here to serve.

May you continue to know God's grace...

And may your lives continue to overflow with service and gratitude.

Amen.