

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Romans 5:1–11**

**Sermon: “At the Right Time”**

*“At the right time Christ died for the ungodly”* (v 6).

That’s a wonderful statement! That’s the Lenten season. In fact, it’s the essence of our Christian faith.

But do we understand the Passion and death of Christ? Has the message of Christ dying for us been repeated so often that it’s become a formula we hear and just nod absentmindedly? Do we no longer hear the wonder of Christ’s work that led him to suffer and die a humiliating death in our stead? Can we, do we comprehend the atonement?

The devil, the world, and our sinful nature are all behind the sin of indifference toward Christ’s Passion, suffering, dying, and rising. But God’s Word is more powerful than those enemies, and in his Word today, God through Paul rouses us with a most rousing declaration of what that familiar, yet magnificent truth means for us. Paul shows us that perhaps more than we grasp, *“Christ died for the ungodly”* is a profound reality.

That's true, first, because we probably forget how much we needed Jesus to do this. "*Christ died for the ungodly*" is profound, because we don't even want to understand how ungodly we were.

In today's Gospel, Jesus clearly taught his disciples that he must suffer, be rejected by the Jewish leaders, be killed, and after three days rise again. Peter's response? He wanted nothing to do with such a mission and took Jesus aside to rebuke him. The very idea! Why would this be necessary?

There's a wholesale rejecting of sin in our culture, and it is nothing new. In the late 1970s, American psychiatrist Karl Menninger wrote a book called "Whatever Became of Sin?" Good question. Maybe in the contemporary mind school shootings still make the list, but abortion, homosexuality, divorce, sex change certainly not.

Yet Paul writes in our text, "*While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*" Ungodly! Without God! Paul even says in verse 10, "enemies" of God! Opposed to God!

And don't overlook the word "we." We were still weak, ungodly, sinners, enemies. Maybe we're right on all those major social issues abortion, homosexuality, transgenderism. Still more than we want to grasp, sin lurks in each of our hearts. We were conceived ungodly, and that wickedness continues in our sinful nature. Look inside. We don't need to look too deep. This thought or that thought that we don't share. The jealousy of friends. The secret pact with ourselves that God doesn't know we're giving him less than our best when we write our offering check or leave our Bible unopened. God does know all of it. By nature, that is who we are. And we must face it because the sinful nature lingers still. Yet Christ died for us, Ungodly.

***"Christ died for the ungodly"*** is profound because the death of the Christ for us is far beyond anything we can comprehend.

Paul writes, ***"One will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"*** (v 7–8s).

We hear about a fireman or police officer dying in the line of duty, a soldier sacrificing himself for his buddies, a mom for her child. But we weren't the adorable child, the loyal brother in arms. All we can bring to the table is weakness, ungodliness, and sinfulness.

And consider this: It was Christ who died for us, the ungodly. The sinless Son of God. The one who is all-glorious needs nothing from anyone. Didn't need us! But nevertheless, made us perfect because he wanted to be with us and us with him. Who loved us from eternity. And then he's the one we ignore, insult, and try to hide from.

When Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ* was released in 2004, there was much criticism of its depiction of Christ's suffering. Some said it was too graphic. Others said that it was emotionally draining rather than spiritually uplifting. Some discouraged parents from allowing young children to view it. Nonetheless, the film was impactful on many levels. Perhaps many who saw *The Passion of the Christ* were stunned by its graphic content. Yet this is the staggering price Jesus paid to redeem us.

The justifying and reconciling Passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus enable us to hope in the glory of God even in the face of suffering. In this same epistle, the Paul exclaims, ***“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us”*** (Romans 8:18).

Christ carried all our sin and the sin of all humankind in his body at the cross. He is our substitute, the innocent for the guilty. There he suffered in anguish and died in our place to satisfy God’s wrath for our sins. And that, together with his resurrection from the dead, not only ensures victory over sin, Satan, and death, but forgiveness, life, and salvation also are now available through faith in him.

***“Christ died for the ungodly”*** is profound because it creates a new relationship that we don’t fully appreciate.

Christ’s dying was all to reestablish a broken relationship. Because God does not want to condemn us, he calls and enables us to repent. The Holy Spirit leads us to have sorrow for our rebellion against the Lord of heaven and earth and to believe ***“that sin has been forgiven and grace has been obtained through Christ”*** (AC XII 3–6, Tappert, German).

Now, then, Paul writes, ***“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

***Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. . . . More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation”*** (vs 1–2, 11).

Paul describes God’s grace in Christ with two terms: justification and reconciliation. Paul’s words, ***“while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son”*** (v 10), make Christ’s death on the cross very personal. It justifies us. Then justification results in peace with God and hope. Peace signifies a new relationship, as does reconciliation. The grace of God is now accessible to us.

Justification and reconciliation are the means by which God brings us into fellowship with himself, with Jesus, and with the Spirit. And so, we experience the answer that negates Peter’s rebuke. Christ gives us the reality of grace and peace. We experience his forgiveness. We desire to do better than to keep on sinning. And when we repent, God forgives us of our sinful nature and all our actual sins.

He forgives us for Jesus' sake. Christ is present in our lives by his Word and Sacrament. He is present in his Word in all its forms. He is present in his Word in the Holy Scriptures read, spoken, and expounded, here among us. He is present in his Word connected to the water of Holy Baptism, which brings us into the kingdom of God, creates faith, and, as for Abraham and Sarah in the Old Testament Reading, gives us a divine calling. He is present in his Word of Holy Absolution, which comforts us and releases us from despair. He is present in his Word, which makes the elements of bread and wine the Sacrament of the Holy Supper, which nourishes us with his true body and his true blood given and shed for us. The crucified and risen Jesus is with us in every joy and sorrow, every gain and loss, every healing and illness, every triumph and temptation!

*“We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”* (vs 3–5).

Hope flows out of our dependence on God's grace. And this hope sustains us in difficult times because its object is the glory of God, regardless of our circumstances. And it is real hope, not hype. It is certain because Christ died for the ungodly. He loves us that much. And since his death has reconciled us to God, reestablished that relationship of peace with God, it is certain that he will be with us even in these most difficult circumstances. This, then, is how and why we can rejoice in our sufferings!

Perhaps people are stunned by the staggering price Jesus paid to redeem us. The justifying and reconciling Passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus enable us to hope in the glory of God even in the time of suffering. In his same Epistle to the Romans, Paul powerfully and perfectly exclaims: ***“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us”*** (Romans 8:18). To be ours for eternity because Christ died for you, for me, the ungodly.

Amen