*The LCA provides this sermon edited for lay-reading, with thanks to the original author.*

Sermon for Proper 6A

# The Text: Romans 5:1-8

How do you save a world? How do you save a world gone mad and coming apart at the seams? How do you save a sin-infected humanity from its own self-destruction?

Science can’t help you. It can’t even save us from a virus.

Economics can’t help you; sin and death are not economic problems. If anything, they are economic equalizers. Both rich and poor are equally sinful; both rich and poor die.

Politics can’t save the world. If anything, politics hastens the world’s destruction, turning everything into a binary polarity of opposites.

Social action won’t save the world. We can organize, mobilize, theorize, and rationalize all we want, but in the end we’re just rearranging deck chairs on a sinking ship. We can dream of a new world order, but it won’t be a new creation, just a reworked old creation, a world 1.2 with all the attendant flaws of version 1.0. At best a patch, at worst something worse than before.

Renovation doesn’t work with the deep issues that plague our humanity. You can’t put a pretty coat of paint on a systemic problem like sin. Topical treatments only go skin deep and don’t get to the root. It’s like treating cancer with plastic surgery or putting new siding on a house with a crumbling foundation and termite ridden walls. Sin has made us autonomous individuals with selves turned inward.

The only good we recognize is what is good for me. The only truth is what is true for me. The only need is what I need. That is sin at its deepest diagnosis. Not being bad or doing bad things or saying bad words or thinking bad thoughts. It’s the heart turned inward on itself, away from God, away from our fellow human beings. It is the idolatry of the self.

Sin creates our own personal autonomous zones. That’s why we can’t unite around causes for longer than a week or two, because causes demand sacrifice, and sacrifice requires that I give up something for someone else. “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.” Perhaps.

How do you save a world bent on self-destruction? How do you save humanity turned on itself and drunk with its own autonomy? God’s solution is the Cross. The Cross of Jesus is the salvation of the world. The Cross of Jesus is the rescue of humanity. At the Cross, the Godly One died for the ungodly. The Sinless One died for sinners. The Prince of Peace made peace with his enemies.

“While we were still weak, at the right moment, on a dark Friday at 3 PM in the afternoon, about 30 AD, Christ died for the ungodly. He didn’t save the salvageable. He didn’t redeem the potentially redeemable. He didn’t rescue his friends and those he knew would follow him. He died for the ungodly, for sinners, for his enemies.

This is how God loves the world. This is how God shows his love for us, while we were yet sinners, wound up in ourselves, turned against God and one another, Christ came in our flesh to die for us, to shed His blood for us. And notice that this all happened before you and I were even born. Yet the apostle Paul says “us,” and that includes you and me. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. But I was born some 2000 years after Jesus’ crucifixion~~,~~ so how can I say, while I was yet a sinner Christ died for me? You can’t. You have to see yourself as part of humanity first. Christ died for all, and therefore all died in Christ. Before you can speak of Jesus as your Saviour, you need to speak of Him as humanity’s Saviour, the Saviour of the world, the Reconciler of humanity.

Adam is more than some guy who lived 930 years and died. He is not simply the first man or one man among many. He is all men. He is all of humanity embodied in one Man. He is us and we are him. He is our identity as flesh born of flesh. We are Adam from the *adamah*, the dust from which we were taken and to the dust to which we return. When Adam sinned, we all sinned. When Adam died, we all died. “Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned….”

In our idolatry of individualism, we don’t see common good, and we don’t see common evil. “Don’t hold me responsible, I’m not responsible for that. I don’t do that. I’m not like that. I wouldn’t say that.” God looks at the world through the lens of the Law and says, “You’re all responsible, everyone in his or her own way contributes, but you are all responsible, without exception.” We want to be the exception, we want to be able to justify ourselves over and against others. But God won’t let us. We are all responsible - individually and collectively, as one huge rebellious Man.

God has consigned all to disobedience under the Law *in order that He might have mercy upon all in Christ.*

Adam was a “type of the One who was to come.” Adam was God’s first Man but not His last. Adam was humanity’s first head and priest, but not the last. Christ in the flesh is God’s second Adam, not the Man of the earth but the Man of heaven. Christ is humanity’s new Head, its new Adam, not made from the dust but born of the Virgin. He’s one of us. He embodies us as a new humanity in His humanity. He joins Himself to us as bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh to take our humanity to the Cross and crucify Sin once for all, to take our humanity to the grave and loose the chains of Death once for all, to raise up our humanity and seat it in glory at the right hand of the Father.

Listen to how the apostle Paul writes of this in 1 Corinthians 15 as he speaks of the resurrection of the body:

*What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.*

That’s how God saved the world. That’s how God rescued humanity from Sin and Death. He sent a second Adam. He put humanity under a new Head. Where the first Adam brought sin, the second Adam brought justification. Where the first brought Death, the second brought resurrection and life. As in Adam all die; so in Christ will all be made alive.

Don’t be afraid to be one with humanity, to be a part of a greater whole. Don’t be afraid to die to self, because self has to die. In Adam we are all autonomous, isolated rebels at war with God and at war with one another. But in Christ, we are reconciled as one people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s treasured and precious possession, one new humanity under a new Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In His name, Amen.