

Text: Romans 5:6-8 (HCSB) Friendship Sunday. **March 1, 2015.**

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us! Amen.

There's an old saying that goes something like this, "A friend is someone who knows all about you, and loves you anyway." Think about that. It's really true, isn't it? If you are sitting next to a friend who invited you today, be thankful for that friend. That friend could probably share a very embarrassing story about you. The time you walked into a post at the mall because you were too busy texting. The time you tripped on the free throw line during a basketball game. That friend knows all about you, but loves you anyway. Many of you know I try to keep my mother away from our church members. She knows too much. But somehow she loves me anyway.

On a deeper and much more serious level, think about what else that friend knows and could share. The stupid thing you did after you had three too many. "But I couldn't help it. I was drunk." Would you want everyone to know about that? Would you want your children to walk up here, right now, and repeat everything you say at home? But I can't help it! Exactly. I can't help it. We were helpless. Helpless to fix our sins. Helpless to make a friend love us. Helpless!

Think about how much more Christ knows. He knows the websites you visit, that you manage to keep even from your spouse. He knows what you really thought about that friend sitting right next to you. Oh yeah, Christ knows all about you.

But Christ loves you anyway! That's right! Christ knows all about you, but he loves you anyway! Can you imagine that great love? Christ knows all about you, but he loves you anyway. While we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. Christ saw you were helpless. He saw you couldn't make him love you. He knew that you were unable to help yourself. So Christ died for you. Christ went to the cross and died for you. Christ didn't wait until you got better. Christ took the first step, the last step and every step in between and Christ died for you. Christ hung on the cross for you. Christ gave his life for you. Christ died for you!

Christ died *for* you. For. This word means in place of. We deserved to die because we were ungodly. But instead of us dying, eternally, Christ died in our place. Christ died for you. In place of you dying, Christ died. It's staggering. It's mind-blowing. I know the word is overused, but it's awesome beyond awesome. Christ died in your place. Christ died instead of you. Christ died so you live. Christ went through hell so you go to heaven. The preacher is speechless. Christ died in place of the ungodly.

Maybe an illustration will help the preacher get some words back. What would you do for a just person? This is someone who is innocent, but unjustly condemned. Think of a person on death row. You know they are innocent. You know they didn't do it. You know DNA testing will prove them not guilty. What would you do? Write letters? Pay for the DNA testing? Hire a lawyer to help them out? Maybe. But would you die for that just person? Would you take their place on death row, sit in their electric chair? Hey. Wait. Easy. That's not how justice works. Very rare, right?

What about a good person? Maybe your uncle who taught you to fish. Your brother who gave you money when you were unemployed. What would you do for that good person? Teach your nephew how to fish? Pay your brother back when you have the chance? Maybe. Possibly. Give him one of your kidneys if he needed it? I suppose I might. Would you give him your heart? Die so he can live? Wow! That's a whole nother thing there, right? Rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good

person perhaps, perhaps, someone might even dare to die. But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us! Did you hear that? While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Did you really catch that? While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Do you notice the contrasts between the illustration of a human dying for a just or good person and Christ dying for us? We weren't just. We were ungodly. We weren't good. We were sinners. It's rare and maybe a perhaps that someone might even dare to die for a good person. But Christ died for the ungodly. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. There is no maybe. God proves his own love for us. Christ proved it on the cross. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God proved it with Christ's empty tomb. You are loved. You are forgiven. You are saved. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. In those scenarios, you might be able to die for one good person, but what about everyone else? Christ died for all the ungodly. God proved his love for all sinners. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. No apologies for the repeat. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This is God's own love. This is one-way love. This is love that gave us what we needed, not what we deserved. Anything good in our relationship with God, comes from God. You don't have to feel bad that you are a receiver in this relationship. That's how God wants it. Christ wants to give his love and he just wants you to have it, to enjoy it, to cherish it, to celebrate it with him for all eternity. There's nothing to hide. Christ knows all about you. And he loves you anyway. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

My friends, if I could point out one more thing about these wonderful verses. Were. Were. We were sinners. Christ's love is so amazing, so complete, so transforming, that in Christ's eyes we are no longer sinners. Our status is saint, perfect, holy, without sin. Christ sees us only with his holiness covering us, so fully, so completely, so totally, our sins don't show through. We were sinners, but now we are without sin.

Man, if you have a friend who loved you enough to invite you here today. that's one special friend. They know a lot about you, could get you into a lot of trouble, but they love you anyway, love you so much they brought you to meet your best friend, Christ. Christ knows even more about you than your friend does. And Christ loves you anyway. Yes, Christ knows all about you and loves you anyway. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Amen.