

1. Introduction ()

I love the church. She is the bride of Christ bought with his precious blood. In the 2000 years since Jesus walked this earth the church has changed often. I often ask myself the question: If Jesus was to pitch up at one of our services and if he was to be part of our community for a month, what would his opinion be. Pews, drums, 1h30? Or would he be more worried about what we were when we were not together here because Christians don't cease to be the church when I say "amen" after the last prayer.

There are many of you who are doing ministry at work / home / elsewhere that I do not know about. But God does. And I want encourage you to keep on and do even more! Don't misunderstand this series as reproving those who are active. If, for example I was to preach on adultery or stealing and you said, "I am not an adulterer, I do not steal" then I would say, "Great! You are living in the right way. If you are not convicted then your conscience is clear."

Last week I said the church has become too self-focussed. It keeps Christians busy with "church activities" – and all the while our culture is becoming less and less Christian the further we go into the 21st Century.

This sermon series was meant to be "get people more involved in church". But I want to ask a more foundational question: what gives my life its meaning and purpose? Another questions: what do we need to recapture of the true calling of Christians and the church?

2. Primary calling¹

When were we on our road trip down the South Coast we stopped the Storms River Bridge and walked out over the gorge. The walkway is narrow (about two people wide) and the drop feels like kilometres! But there is a guard rail for which I was very thankful.

Todd Wilson has written a book called *More* in which he puts forward a framework (guards rails) for life: BE-DO-GO. Who am I created to BE? What am I created to DO? Where am I created GO (do it)? The answers to those three questions are: the primary calling shared by all Christians, everywhere, at all times is to be disciples who make disciples wherever we are. There are many other measures and scorecards that people use to answer the BE-DO-GO questions. But the reality is that if you make a list of all the things you won, conquered, or achieved – which of them will have value beyond the grave?

Cotton Mather, an American colonial historian, theologian, and author who co-founded Yale University said that there was a general or common calling for all Christians, but there was

¹ Cotton Mather, the American colonial historian, theologian, and author who co-founded Yale University

also a unique and personal calling for each individual Christian. Every believer has unique gifts, experiences, skills, upbringing, motivators, desires, and abilities. There is a unique and personal way to answer the BE-DO-GO questions.

3. Personal calling

We need to see ourselves through God's eyes. If we do it will change our perspective, purpose and perseverance. Let's read Ephesian 2:10

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (NIV)

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (NLT)

A. New perspective

"For we are God's handiwork"

Paul reminds us that we are the 'workmanship' or better still the 'masterpiece²' of God. The word there in the Greek is the word from which we get our English word poem. So don't think some clunky grade 5 handiwork school project. Don't even think a great work of sculpture – think of God as the poet and we are the poem. Poetry comes from the imagination and creativity of a human being. But when the creator imagines his poems become human beings. Think of the work of a poet: Antjie Krog, Breyten Breytenbach or James Matthews. Carefully crafted, each word chosen specifically, punctuation used with intention, the flow, the meter, the rhyme, the rhythm. The comedy and drama, the tragedy and elation – God knows and wrote it all into our lives.

We are not just another unimportant human ant – one of the 7.5 billion sprawled across the face of the earth. Does it surprise you that God could take interest in all writing 7.5 billion poems? Your God is too small. Is there anything too much for the infinite God? No, you have profound significance. The journey of your life is a masterpiece poem and each day is a line. And God is revealing his love for you and his care for the world through you.

Not only are we God's masterpieces, we also have the new life of Christ in us. We are "created in Christ Jesus". The reference here is to the first couple of verses of this chapter in which God. We were completely lost and without hope in our sin. God shone the light of Christ into our

² <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/you-are-god-s-workmanship>

lives. His great love is a gift given. We are saved by Christ's death in our place on the cross. And we are now a display of the work of God's grace for all the world to see.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
(2Cor. 5:17)

B. New purpose

"...to do good works..."

Two things here: (1) In the Greek, these acts are good not only because they are inherently good, but also because profitable and useful deeds that benefit others. It is the difference between taking your 5 minute tea break to relax, but no more than 15 minutes – which is good; AND taking your 15 minute tea break to make two cups of tea so that you can encourage your work colleague who is feeling low.

(2) These good works are not to earn salvation but they are the inevitable fruit of salvation. We are like a fruit tree that bears fruit after its kind. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army made the interesting statement: Faith and works should travel side by side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again -- until they can scarcely distinguish which is the one and which is the other.

C. New perseverance

"...which God prepared in advance for us to do"

The Greek literally says, "to walk in" – and so the illustration of William Booth is doubly as appropriate. Our faith expressed in our works, our works proving our faith – and so we walk.

But even more astounding is the fact that God has prepared them – we are not the ones who have to organise, arrange, develop, prepare, and align. We just have to pray, "Father, thank you for the good works already prepared for me today, for the fact that they are waiting for me to step into – give me eyes to see them and courage to step into them." *This is not: find the needle in a haystack!*

Do you have any idea how many good works God has prepared for you? They are waiting for you to enter into as you walk in faith and trust and dependence upon Christ. The situations are there, ready and waiting for you to step into. This is what God has called you to. As you do so, you become a vivid display of the greatness and the glory of God.³

4. Conclusion

If you believed this how would it change Monday; this week; this year?

³ Ray Stedman

Questions

- 1) Read Ephesians 2:1-10
- 2) As a reminder from last week, how do you answer the following questions:
 - a) Who am I created to be?
 - b) What and I created to do?
 - c) Where am I created to go?
- 3) What is your favourite poem? Why? What makes a poet and poetry a beautiful analogy for God and humans?
- 4) What does verses 1-9 teach us about what it means to be “created in Christ”
- 5) Read verses 8-10. What does this teach you about the relationship between faith and works?
 - a) Does William Booth’s illustration? If so, how?
- 6) Do you treat the good works as ‘a needle in a hay stack’ or ‘I must create opportunities’ or ‘prepared in advance by God’?
- 7) If you believed and lived according to verse 10, how would it change Monday; this week; this year?
- 8) Have you had any “prepared in advance” moments yet this week?
- 9) Pray for courage, awareness and willingness for this week.