

Ephesians 2:8-10

This past week the Associated Press reported some research from an independent agency. “We can’t get no job satisfaction,” the article stated. According to this research, only 45 percent of Americans are satisfied with their jobs. That’s the lowest level ever recorded, at least since the agency started tracking the issue in 1987. Today we are considering how Christians look at their jobs—all of them, not just the job (the task) you get paid for. For the next three Sundays we will meditate on Christian stewardship, namely, managing what God gives me. So I ask you: are you happy with the jobs God has given you in life? Are you excited about the tasks he places before you every day? Does the word “work” make you cringe and run the other way? The Word has a message for us: **“Enjoy God’s Work!” 1. He gives us an eternal future, and 2. He sends us to our tasks.**

1. He gives us an eternal future

The letter of Ephesians unfolds many mysteries about our daily life. Paul shows that the world isn’t spinning out of control as it may sometimes seem. Neither are you the captain of your life. And that is good! God is in control. I know some of you are planners and can appreciate good planning. God is a planner too, and you are very much in his plans. In chapter one, the Apostle Paul explains that the plans God has for us individually began even before he created the world. He meticulously unfolded the plan of rescue for our world.

In chapter two of Ephesians Paul zeroes in on us. He wrote, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.” Paul was talking to people like you and me; some had been believers in the Messiah for their whole lives and others had come to believe later in life. Yet, no matter what our background is, when it comes to being rescued eternally, Paul has something to say: “Our works are worthless.” Our tasks have nothing to do with being saved. If they did, we’d be filled with pride and boast about it. But dead people don’t do much work. You and I were dead in our sins, completely unable to save ourselves. We weren’t bringing ourselves back to life.

So, we look to Scripture and we see the heart of God, who goes to work for us: “For it is by grace you are saved through faith – this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” God, in his grace, saved us. This is God’s work. **Enjoy it!** He rescued you by grace. Grace is a word we use all the time as Lutherans. Remember that grace is God’s undeserved love. Grace is the quality of God that prompted him to send a Savior. Grace is a mystery. Why would a perfectly holy God send his one and only Son to die for sinners? We were objects of wrath, not worth the dust we were made out of – and God decided to work for our salvation? Yes. That’s grace. That’s God’s free gift to you, no strings attached.

One thing that makes me chuckle this time of year is this: the car commercials. Maybe you’ve seen the pretty new luxury car on TV with a big red bow tied on the top of it, sliding effortlessly through the snow. “Give the gift of joy this holiday season,” the announcer says. Personally, that type of gift is way out of my tax bracket. But what amazes me is the keys that new cars have today. Computerized and specially shaped, a unique key for every single car. Christ Jesus was the unique key. Our human need was the lock. Only the perfect key would fit. So, Jesus was perfectly designed to carry out the Father’s work and unlock our eternity. True God, yet true man; born at exactly the right time, to a Virgin, living under the law, and fulfilling every one of God’s promises. **Enjoy God’s Work. He gives us an eternal future** by grace alone. The whole rescue plan, from beginning to end, is God’s gift to you.

The holy work of Jesus not only meant death on a cross in our place. His love was woven into every daily task from his birth to his death. Jesus’ each and every task was of utmost

importance, no matter how small or insignificant it may have seemed around the house, neighborhood, or synagogue. Jesus prayed to God the Father, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4). The work of God is to destroy the devil’s work and to give us a future with him. **Enjoy God’s work because** he made us objects of grace.

2. He sends us to our tasks.

There are some big questions in life. ‘How do I get right with God?’ is one of them. The answer to that question is wrapped up in Jesus’ life and death. From the moment he was wrapped in swaddling clothes to the moment he was wrapped in grave clothes, Jesus was living the task the Father had given him. And it was all to give us a future in heaven. That knowledge helps us with another one of life’s big questions: “Why am I here?” St. Paul tells us about that too. Our lives are all about Christ: “For me to live is Christ.” **Enjoy God’s work** because he does have a task for you!

“We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Have you ever considered yourself a piece of God’s work? Normally, when we say someone is a “real piece of work” it is not a compliment. But God has made us a real piece of work, his work. We are his masterpiece. He is the master artisan; we are the lump of clay. But it’s more than just thinking “God gave me my body.” It’s more than what we confess in the first article of the Apostle’s Creed: “I believe that God made me and all that exists, that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members.” It’s more. We are created *in Christ Jesus*. Paul’s talking about our new life in Christ. There’s new person created by God. The old is gone, the new has come.

Sometimes our jobs can make us feel insignificant or average. You might have lost a job or retired and now you are asking yourself, “Do you really have a task for me, LORD? Where? When?” Satan grabs on to these hints of doubt, and he yanks. He wants to pull you down deeper. He wants you down in the depths of despair. Self-loathing and depression are the temptations Satan uses to rob us of our joy in Jesus. We sink down, thinking there’s nothing left. And we say to ourselves, “My job is gone, my task doesn’t exist, and my purpose disappeared just as quickly. I don’t feel like a special creation today...”

But our calling as Christians lifts us up. **Enjoy God’s work!** We are saved by grace. Jesus loved you enough to die for you and now God’s created you for something special. “You are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.” **God sends us to our tasks.** This is what separates the work of the Christian from the world’s thinking. We find the meaning and purpose of every task wrapped in Christ. My life isn’t my own. My life is hidden with Christ in God.

Here too is where the purpose of our creation comes in. We have a purpose – to do good works. Jesus said good trees naturally produce good fruit. You can’t stop an apple tree from making apples. We can’t help it either. We perform good works, because God sends us to our tasks. They are so important that God “prepared them in advance for us to do.” He prepared them and he sets them in place in our lives. God gives us many different tasks and each one was prepared by him for us. We aren’t robots, but God does prepare them for us.

But what are these tasks? What will they look like in my life? The tasks are in every aspect and detail of our lives. God’s work in you is not just what happens at church. There isn’t one task that isn’t affected by Jesus OR doesn’t affect our relationship with Jesus. Our calling in Christ breaks down the fake barrier between the sacred and the secular tasks in our life. They are not little compartments with God here, work there, family there. They are all woven into a

seamless web of faith and love in action. Doing the dishes, taking out the trash, working hard, volunteering, coaching, cooking—all these are ways to live for Christ in your tasks.

Don't forget that when we were small, God used another person to feed and clothe us. It is how God cares for his family. Now he takes care of people through your tasks, in one way or another. When you are old, God may again use someone else to take care of you. That will be their God-given task in Christ. **Enjoy God's work in fellow believers.**

In writing about marriage in 1522 Luther wrote these words about a simple task that takes place in the home: "God and the angels smile when a man changes a diaper." Everything takes on a whole new glory when it is done in faith and love for Jesus. "*Whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him*" (Colossians 3:17). There isn't one task at work or home that is removed from this attitude of Christian service.

Life makes sense when we accept our valuable place in his plan. Our daily tasks aren't about our success or comfort, but about something bigger—displaying his grace to others. With that big picture in mind we have one job description no matter what the task: "*We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.*" God's work is both for you and in you. He's given you a future in heaven and he sends you to a unique set of tasks. In the morning before all the parts of life rush at you, spend some time in quiet prayer looking at the tasks ahead. Empowered by his love for you, **enjoy God's work!** AMEN.

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