

## **Ephesians 2: Created for Good Works**

### **Discovering our identity and calling in the book of Ephesians**

What are some of the ways that people perceive the church?

Describe the story that Paul believes forms the Ephesians' identity (vs 1-9)

What does it mean that we are God's handiwork (vs 10)?

What is the role of good works in the life of the church?

How does God show the incomparable riches of his grace (vs 7)?

If the church is God's handiwork, what sort of 'good works' could the church engage in which would reveal Christ to the world?

What could your connect group do together to reveal Christ to others?

During our series looking at Ephesians we are asking the question

Who are we? And What is our calling?

Today's Bible reading tells us that people who put their trust in Jesus

Are **God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works**

Brian Rosner wrote a Biblical theology of identity called known by God

And a couple of years ago when interviewed about his new book he said

When you meet someone for the first time, you will probably notice their gender and race,

you may try to guess their age and will certainly try to learn their name.

You might also ask about their cultural background, occupation, significant relationship, and where they live.

AS you grow in your relationship with them, you will want to go deeper and ask more questions about their story

What is your family background?

What in your past has made you who you are today?

Where are you heading in life?

What defines you?

To know someone you have to know their story.

This passage from Paul's letter

Tells us about our story

Where we have come from

Where we are going ,      What our purpose is

Building on chapter one, it helps us to understand who we are

Just as we were encouraged last week,

We see again that we are people made, loved and redeemed for a purpose!

**Last week we saw that the church is a people of blessing  
Blessed through the Father, Son and Spirit**

**We are a people of hope, valuable to God and a people of power!**  
Power to bless as we are blessed

Here in chapter 2, Paul fleshes out what it means to be a people of blessing  
By telling us more of our story

Recently Ashish reminded me of how he shared a Charlie brown comic strip with me  
when I was a curate and I loved it so much I put it in my next sermon  
Well it was a good one  
So after that excellent reminder  
Let me share it with you all these years on again!

Snoopy is holding a sign which says  
    'Jesus is the answer'  
Charlie Brown looks at it,  
    He thinks  
        He thinks  
Then he says  
    But 'what is the question?'

All Spark kids know the answer  
And who did Noah bring on the boat?  
    Jesus!  
And what was the garden that Adam and Eve lived in?  
Jesus!

Jesus always seems to be the answer  
    **but what is the question?**

Understanding our story  
Gives us the question and the answer

In Vs One, Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians of their old life  
Vs 1 –They, like all of humanity, were spiritually dead  
    Dead in their transgressions,

Vs 2-3 three influences used to shape their lives  
the world vs 2, the devil vs 2 and their own wrongdoings (vs 3).

It's easy to see the devastation,  
the evil and the injustice in our world.

The work of Satan is less obvious but no less dangerous.

Perhaps even harder to see and admit is our own wrongdoing

**BUT**

Vs 5 because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Our identity is found in looking to the blessings of God

When we are made alive in Christ,  
We are given Christ's power over the evil in the world, Satan and our own sinful nature

We find our identity in our new life with Christ!

We are people made alive in Christ by God's grace

**this new identity is a gift**

Vs 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.

IT would be interesting at this point where Paul is telling us about who the church is from God's perspective  
To stop and question

What does the world think about the church?

What is the perceived purpose of the church?

I mentioned last week some of the interesting reactions I receive when sharing with people that I am a Christian minister

One response when I say I work for the church

Isn't that just on Sunday? What do you do the rest of the week?

Some people associate the church with awful things that have happened inside the walls of church buildings  
or by people who have used the name Christian and yet dishonored Christ's name

Some people imagine that the church is about doing good  
That we might gain a reward, the reward of heaven

But this passage shares our story

A people of grace  
Who do not earn their place  
But are given this identity through the grace and love of God

We are people saved by grace through faith

**And with this identity comes purpose**

**understanding our story**  
**Shows us where we are going and gives us purpose**

Vs 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Believers are made alive with Christ,  
Raised up with him,  
And made to sit with him in the heavenly places

Paul speaks of the future for God's people in the present  
Because central to this letter is his emphasis of the power that we have now in Christ  
Christ's power over evil, sin and death  
Remember from last week  
At the time Paul was writing into a power and fear context  
We are people who have been given God's power now

**Our Identity gives us purpose**

In vs 10 we read that 'we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. '

We are God's handiwork  
Which can also be translated workmanship, his masterpieces

Recently we moved house  
And in some of the many many boxes  
Were the masterpieces from our girls kinder years  
The years where these masterpieces are prolific

And it is not just the girls  
For when I packed up my parents house  
There under the house were my “masterpieces”  
My year 12 art folio and more  
Damaged from being stored in a damp environment for many years  
But still I didn’t through them out either

Why? None of these will ever be hung at the NGV  
Why are they so precious  
That even when damaged  
I can’t throw them out?

Because they are our handiwork,  
The work of our hands,  
Our own creation,  
In them is us,  
We made them and put ourselves into them

To say we are God’s handiwork or masterpieces  
Is to acknowledge that we are made in the image of God  
That we bear his mark  
That saved by grace and In Christ  
We reveal him

The work of his hands  
His creation,  
Made new in Jesus  
So that we can do the great things that he prepared in advance for us to do

Our new identity gives us a united purpose.

We are people who have been made new in Christ  
Given power, hope  
And a path of living that out that has already been prepared for us  
We are infinitely valuable to God  
We are his masterpiece!

We are not saved by good works  
We are saved for good works

We are blessed to be a blessing

It was great to be at the young adults retreat yesterday.  
After some practical and relevant sessions on evangelism  
Some of us went to the Ashcome maze

How are you at mazes?

I'll be honest, I'm not great

Which can be a problem since I'm also a bit competitive!

I have been known to go down the same dead end multiple times.

In the middle of one of the mazes was one of those towers and as more and more young adults made it to the tower,  
They could see the rest of us running around in the wrong direction  
Eventually, grace and mercy was bestowed  
Encouragement was given and we made our way to the tower with the rest

In contrast to the maze  
The gardens also had a labyrinth

Labyrinths are different to mazes

There are no dead ends.

Christians have made use of labyrinths for the last nearly two thousand years  
There is a destination, and you will arrive there, despite many twist and turns along the way  
Jesus said I am the way, the truth and the life  
And following Jesus is a journey with a clear destination

And not just as individuals but also as a communal experience  
Praying God may your blessing be upon us as we walk, may your grace sustain us each step of the way

May we be a blessing as we have been blessed

Why not just a straight path  
Why a path at all  
Why not just the destination

For God desires that none should perish but all should have eternal life  
2 Peter 3:9, John 3:16

On this journey God has prepared for us the way that we can share his blessing with the world

God has already prepared the way that we as a church community  
Will share our hope locally and globally

Grow as disciples of Jesus

And use our gifts to serve

Will we walk this journey together  
keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus  
Reading his word, praying: your will be done  
Encouraging each other

We are God's masterpieces - made new in Jesus  
With power and hope  
And given a great purpose.  
We are people saved by grace – and saved for a reason and purpose.

Will this identity for our purpose as a church community

WE are God's handiwork, his masterpieces made for amazing things

Vs 6 and 7

God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace,

The church with all of its different people  
Are members of God's household,  
built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

**Alistair McGrath asserts that the story we believe we are in determines what we think about ourselves and consequently how we live.**

Who has written the story that shapes your life?

Will God's story  
be the story that shapes us  
who we are and where we are going?

Will we have the courage to prayerfully encourage each other  
To use the gifts God has given us to serve  
the privilege of doing the wonderful things he has prepared for us as a community?

WE are God's masterpieces  
We are in Christ : people of grace  
for a purpose: created for good works

**Will you join me in prayer as we seek to find our purpose in who we are in Christ**

Lord God,  
Thank you that we are in you  
A people of blessing  
Thank you for bringing us out of death  
And giving us life,  
Thank you for the good works you have prepared for us.  
Fill us with your Spirit, that we might be able to live as people who know who they are –  
your mighty handiwork!  
And bless as we have been blessed  
That none should perish but all should come to repentance and eternal life in you  
In Jesus name, Amen.