

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:10 “Created for a Purpose”

Rev. Adam Osier, Dean, Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minnesota

Lutheransforlife.org

All created things have a purpose. Think about it. There is no created thing that was built without purpose in mind. These intentional designs extend from the obvious to the less obvious. Everyone knows the purpose of a shovel or a chair or a pencil. They were created for digging, sitting, and writing. Even those things in our world that seem pointless, like the hole in the tab of a pop can, are made for a purpose. (Who knew that those holes were created to be twisted over the mouth of the can to be a straw holder?) Humanity’s ability to purposefully create is truly impressive. Even when the outside observer may not be able to discern an item’s purpose, that doesn’t deny that the item has a purpose. That is a discernment problem, not proof of purposelessness.

If humanity possesses the ability to create with purpose, it is therefore not a stretch to argue that humanity itself was created for a purpose. Implied in that statement is the reality that we have a Creator. We live in a time and place where the mention of a Creator may be unpopular. But that denial doesn’t satisfy the *a priori* assertion that created things have a designer. We perceive beauty in creation. It’s a reasonable assertion that a Creator exists. We are part of creation; therefore, we too have a Creator. Christians are convinced that this Creator is the God who revealed Himself in the Bible, and that He has fashioned men and women for a purpose.

But many doubt that assertion. Statistics show we are suffering from a pandemic of purposelessness. According to a study conducted by *Monitoring the Future*, nearly 45% of middle and high school students say that their life is not useful. This is a stark increase from the year 2000, in which 25% of students of the same demographic answered similarly. And it is up nearly 10% from the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. This isn’t limited to teenagers. The data reveals a mindset that has led youth and adults alike to suffer depression and other

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:10 “Created for a Purpose”

Rev. Adam Osier, Dean, Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minnesota

Lutheransforlife.org

insecurities. Devaluation of the human person has led many to self-harm and other destructive behaviors and addictions. The consequences of this are tragic, and sadly, they hit close to home for many. A soul unconscious of his or her purpose inevitably faces futile disappointment.

In contrast to this, God assures readers of His Word that they indeed have purpose. In Ephesians, Paul says to those redeemed by Christ, “**We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them**” (Ephesians 2:10).

In this single verse, God declares to us something incredible. He says that human beings, created in His image, redeemed by the blood of Christ through faith, are His *workmanship*.

This God, who created the world and all that exists by speaking it into existence, is the same God who created us in Christ Jesus. Through His Word, He calls us who were dead in trespasses and sin to life through faith in Christ Jesus. In Genesis, when God created the world, He called each work of His hand “good” (cf. Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25). When He created Adam, He called him “*very good*” (Genesis 1:31). Our Father, through the redeeming work of His Son, Jesus, now bestows upon believers that same declaration of approval. Because we are God’s workmanship, we can rest in the certainty that we are not a mistake, not an accident, not a blob of cells, not a bag of chemicals reacting to create an illusion of purpose. Believers in Jesus Christ are the choice, carefully handcrafted treasure and apple of God’s eye—His creative masterpiece. From the moment you were being knitted together in your mother’s womb (Psalm 139:13), God’s began his careful construction of His chosen jewel of redemption.

There is tremendous value, meaning, and purpose in being God’s masterpiece. Imagine traveling back in time to witness one of the great artists like da Vinci, Michelangelo, or van Gogh

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:10 “Created for a Purpose”

Rev. Adam Osier, Dean, Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minnesota

Lutheransforlife.org

creating one of their masterpieces. There isn't one of us who, while witnessing the master attend to his craft, would walk up to him and say, “I think you could use another star in that sky,” or “Perhaps you should consider taking just a bit more stone from that part of the sculpture.” Nor would we, once they were finished, attempt to add our own brush strokes or chisel marks to the finished piece. We would simply enjoy the opportunity to witness the master at work, and when he was done, we would take in the beauty of the work he created—that is to say, we would appreciate its intended purpose. Yet many who would give one of their limbs for such an opportunity can look in the mirror at God's masterpiece and fail to see the beauty of what He has made. In Christ, we are God's workmanship, and we are called to recognize that truth.

We know that as God's creative masterpiece, we were created for a purpose, and the text tells us what that purpose is: He created us for good works.

Christians have sometimes confused good works as a means by which to obtain the favor of God, but the text doesn't allow for this interpretation. God's favor is achieved before the works are assigned. The workmanship is completed so the good works can be accomplished. Just as the instrument cannot produce music until its construction is complete, the believer's works aren't good until the Master has accomplished His masterpiece. Good works are the fruit of the Master's labors.

This truth illustrates what good works actually are: God's purposes being fulfilled through us. God creates vessels to accomplish His work, in His way, on His behalf. Believers accomplish good works serving their neighbors as the hands and feet of Jesus. Lutherans call this the doctrine of vocation. This concept isn't new, but it is transformational.

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:10 “Created for a Purpose”

Rev. Adam Osier, Dean, Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minnesota

Lutheransforlife.org

The doctrine of vocation describes the believer’s purpose. The word *vocation* carries the idea of calling, and in the case of Christian vocation, the callings come from God. Everyone has these callings in the areas of society, family, and the Church. Being a child is a calling. Being a parent is a calling. Being a student is a calling. Being a citizen is a calling. Each so-called occupation is a calling. The role one fills in one’s church is a calling. As God crafts each of us in our callings, He places us in the presence of neighbors whom we are to love on His behalf.

An example may help to illustrate this more fully. Take the calling of motherhood. In this calling, mothers are given neighbors to love, namely their children. As mothers serve their children by feeding them, dressing them, changing their diapers and potty training them, disciplining them, and comforting them, they act as Jesus to their children. And according to Matthew 25:40, in being faithful to her duties, the mother is also serving Jesus, who is “hidden” in her child.

Although this may sound mundane, it is paradigm shifting. When people search for purpose and meaning in their lives, they tend to look for extraordinary future goals they are to accomplish—the next mission trip opportunity, the new promotion at work, the philanthropic venture. These are good things and are certainly ways to love our neighbors, but they account for a very small portion of the callings God’s gives to believers. The doctrine of vocation teaches that in even the most mundane aspects of life, as masterpieces of the Almighty, we have a purpose. We are to be faithful in our callings.

This is what Paul means in our text when he says that God has good works for us to do, what He has “prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). The Creator, who chose us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), had a planned purpose for who

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:10 “Created for a Purpose”

Rev. Adam Osier, Dean, Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minnesota

Lutheransforlife.org

we were to be. He knew our callings and prepared them for us as He knitted us together in the wombs of our mothers (Psalm 139:13). He knew the neighbors who would need His love—physically, spiritually, emotionally—and He prepared us to be vessels of that love and service. He also knew that in fulfilling our purposes, we would see Him hidden in our neighbors.

These callings are not something we chose. They are placed in the paths on which God calls us. We “walk in them,” as the text says. In the ordinary and sometimes boring stations of life, we are called to be faithful. We do not always have the privilege of seeing the final product of what our work is accomplishing. We see the proverbial back of the tapestry. We see the messy incompleteness. But as we walk in the paths God calls us down, faithfully practicing good as we seek to love our neighbor, we are assured that God is working all things “together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Brothers and sisters, in Christ you are God’s masterpiece. You were created for a purpose. You are the hands and feet of Christ demonstrating His love in a world that desperately needs it. Live out that purpose in the strength that comes from Him and wait joyfully for the day where we get to see His finished product. Amen.