

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:1-10 “Just As ... IAM”

Rev. Michael W. Salemink, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life
lutheransforlife.org

William Ernest Henley only had one leg.

Well, he had one leg and half of another.

A childhood tuberculosis of the bone took his left below the knee.

But he also had shaggy hair, a flame-red beard, and hulking shoulders

that one contemporary compared to a dwarf.

Another lifelong friend likened him to the Olympian god Pan.

Robert Louis Stevenson patterned the pirate Long John Silver after Henley,

and J. M. Barrie derived Peter Pan’s Wendy from Henley’s daughter Margaret.

His greatest renown, though, came from a poem he wrote in 1875.

“Invictus” culminates in these words:

“I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.”

The Greeks of antiquity had their mythologies.

Our time likewise idolizes.

We prefer the fable of the self-made man.

Pagans such as the Ephesians dreamed in fantasy while we do the same in high-def science

fiction. The Apostle’s epistle ballads in their dialect about heavenly places,

spirits at work in sons of disobedience, and the prince of the power of the air.

They told tales of demons and deities, and our epics focus more on devices.

Our fascination with gadgets matches their attention to goblins and goddesses.

Where they revered exaggerated creatures—fairies and fiends,

we venerate extravagant structures—offices and factories.

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:1-10 “Just As ... IAM”

Rev. Michael W. Salemink, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life
lutheransforlife.org

We simply substitute aluminum and concrete for bronze and stone
or swap the statues for screens.

Leviathans now look like appliances,
but new-fangled mechanisms still narrate the same old-fashioned epics.
And the modern ones promise no lesser a salvation than the primitives.

What if the rumors are true?

What if we did make ourselves?

We start with the feet, don't we?

We have to have hard and heavy feet, for stomping and demolishing,
to invade and overtake and occupy, immovable and unwavering.

Maybe we make them from marble or precious metal or gemstone,
and six or eight or a hundred instead of only two.

We give ourselves gleaming golden skin –

no, platinum for a more impervious surface but just as pretty.

Then let's add a lot of arms, a whole set of hands,
an entire collection of fingers to touch and clutch and grab and gather and hold and hoard
whatever we want.

Put talons on them too,

scales and spikes and claws so that we can keep all we acquire.

Mount infinite joints, and we've got freedom

to reconfigure our appearance for any reason and redefine our identity at any time.

Life Sunday 2024
Ephesians 2:1-10 "Just As ... IAM"
Rev. Michael W. Salemink, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life
lutheransforlife.org

Make me taller.

That means more attractive, more impressive, more intimidating.

I'll take wheels and wings as well,

because why walk when I can ride or fly, and fins for swimming.

Nowhere should lie outside my ability to annex and inhabit.

Leave off the eyes and ears.

Extra noses and tongues go in their place.

Listening's too submissive, and ingesting's better than simply observing.

So, a huge mouth.

Indulge.

Gratify.

Not just consume but also command, complain, criticize.

Turn lungs, liver, and kidneys into additional intestines.

More digesting, discarding, disposing.

Forge and weld hearts of steel,

streamlined and efficient like an engine gulping in fuel and pumping out force.

Electricity rather than emotion pulsing the torque along,

toxic vapor for oxygen and venom instead of blood to repel predators and enemies.

No genitals because reproduction results in obligation.

Just glands or better yet buttons discharging stimulants or sedatives on demand.

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:1-10 “Just As ... IAM”

Rev. Michael W. Salemink, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life

lutheransforlife.org

Narrow brain, like microchips and motherboards, not for creativity or contemplation but for calculating.

Hypodermic needle hair that taps and extracts.

Kill switch could prove useful if I get tired or find you inconvenient.

We design our self and turn out machines.

If we decide our life, we end up monsters.

If we exist as our own workmanship like the mythology insists,

we become Frankenstein casserole abominations.

Our nature, our spirit, our heart remains the one thing we can't fabricate and manufacture.

Humankind cannot keep our fingerprints and particles, oils and odors

off anything we contact and handle,

whether substance, situation, idea, or individual.

We engineer and assemble only in our own image –

greedy and gluttonous, lustful and lazy,

covetous and competitive, selfish and sinful.

We can't create, we only replicate, facsimile, and mimeograph,

our telltale watermark laser-etched, letting everyone know where the blemish came from

and who broke the thing.

We did not come from nothing.

We are not self-sustaining.

We are contingent.

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:1-10 "Just As ... IAM"

Rev. Michael W. Salemink, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life
lutheransforlife.org

We are derivative.

We are neither unbounded nor alone.

Even an island gets kissed by the ocean.

Even a rock feels the rain.

Like it or not, we are God's workmanship.

Humankind bears the silhouette of our Maker.

This species carries the signature of the Father Almighty.

Ephesians or Americans, long-ago or present-day, Paul calls us *poiema theou*.

It translates as the Lord's creation, of God's doing, divine poetry.

He has painted and pours Himself into each one of our race.

He scribbles Himself all over our kind.

Whatever He touches cannot stay as before and becomes uniquely His own.

He leaves residues and evidence that Most High was here.

He can't bring us into being without it reflecting His nature and His character.

We embody the image of Trinity,

relationship and favor and invitation gracing over even the grotesque.

Organism implies origin.

Child assumes parent.

And bride corresponds as complementary to husband.

God's gotten Himself all wrapped up in us.

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:1-10 "Just As ... IAM"

Rev. Michael W. Salemink, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life
lutheransforlife.org

First, He winds His will and His Word into bringing us forth,
summoning us into being out of His own desire.

Next, He threads His fingers through the dust of the ground,
molding humanity on hands and knees chalked elbow-deep and caked up to the neck,
knitting us together one rib to another in mother's womb with surgical precision,
whispering our chests full of His own breath of life.

Then, this Author, Architect, and Artisan twists His whole being into our tissue.

He incarnates Himself skeleton, skin, muscle, and blood as embryo gestating in Mary's belly.

Fetus and infant, toddler and teenager, adult and aged,

Jesus Christ suffers our sicknesses and shoulders our sorrows,

High Priest like unto His brothers in every respect

and form of a servant obedient even unto death on a cross.

Finally, He knots His Spirit into our bodies,

templing our flesh by trickle of baptismal water and taste of eucharistic bread and wine.

He calls such as us by His family name,

adopts into His household inheritance, incorporates into His kingdom majesty,

and resurrects alongside His Son for abundant honor and everlasting life.

And this He performs no matter anyone's age, ability, history, or appearance.

So the Lord our God fashioned us eyes

to draw us outside ourselves like Father to Son and both to the Holy Ghost.

He furnished us ears as entryways for His promises and truths to our deepest recesses,

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:1-10 "Just As ... IAM"

Rev. Michael W. Salemink, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life

lutheransforlife.org

and redundant doubles of each that we might share His fondness for surplus.

He formed us with noses that entice us toward hope and instruct us about trust.

He fit us with mouths not only to dine and drink but also to disclose and dialogue.

Our Almighty Maker ordained our teeth solid enough to advocate and counsel even in adversity

but smooth enough to assist instead of attack,

tempered by tongues, gums, lips, and chops, making us mindful of tenderness.

He allotted us brains that deduce and conclude

paired with minds that recognize, remember, ideate, and dream.

He imparted us hairs that He numbers

the same way He knows our secrets and our concerns, our histories and our destinies.

Our Heavenly Father granted us arms for embracing, hands for helping and welcoming,

legs to dance and play together, and feet that we may accompany one another.

He handed us skin so we sense our delicacy and limitations,

muscles and vessels prepared for connection,

spine and nerves suited to communicating,

heart and blood because only vulnerable amounts to available.

He provided us liver and kidneys to wring us blessings even out of what may seem unsafe

and bestowed male and female members< indicating both our distinctives and our dependencies.

Our Gracious Savior inculcated in us physical impulse toward recovery

that we may long for His forgiveness and live in His redemption.

Christ crucified has made us gods, plural.

Life Sunday 2024

Ephesians 2:1-10 "Just As ... IAM"

Rev. Michael W. Salemink, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life

lutheransforlife.org

That is to say, Christ arisen has made us God's, possessive.

Every human being is God's workmanship, mirroring Messiah, just as I am.

Juvenile or senile, each one is gift to be received.

Surprise pregnancy or terminal diagnosis, each one is privilege to be enjoyed.

Impaired or intense, all human lives are special, precious, priceless from fertilization to forever.

Beyond behaviors and bills, propositions and principles,

beyond personal choice, political controversy, or public opinion,

sanctity of life is for speaking, for showing, and for sharing.

And above all, sanctity of life is for us, for you and for me, just as I am.