

One of my favorite ways to waste time on the internet is to look at those memes called “You had one job”. Since we’re talking about work today, let’s look at some examples of not so great pieces of work.

## ONE JOB SLIDES

Today we conclude our journey through the words of our purpose statement. Let’s look at our purpose statement again.

## POWERPOINT SLIDE

Our goal is to make our purpose statement a part of everything we say and everything do. The last section of our purpose statement is:

## BACK TO SERMON SLIDE

Work to be a blessing to our community and the world.

Just as we need to be intentional about how we welcome each other, just as we need to be intentional about our continuing spiritual education, we need to be intentional about the work that we as followers of Christ are called to do in this world.

To help our conversation about working intentionally, we turn to the letter to the church at Ephesus. Ephesians is a letter that has been attributed to Paul mostly because his name is mentioned twice in this book and in the first person. As concrete as this may seem, the authorship of this book is hotly debated. There are several reasons for this. If we look at letters that are undisputedly Paul’s. Like 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans, they all address very clear issues going on in each church. Ephesians doesn’t address any specific issue.

Ephesians doesn’t start out with Paul’s typical greeting. If you compare Ephesians to a letter like Galatians or Philippians, you’ll note significant differences in vocabulary and style. 41 terms are unique to Ephesians and has 84 terms that Paul does not use in any of his other undisputed letters. This letter contains no personal references to Paul himself. Nothing like

Galatians 6:17 where Paul says, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” There’s more about this, but I think it’s time to conclude the seminary New Testament lecture part of this sermon.

While there may be a question of authorship, there should be no question about the importance of the message of this letter. The purpose of Ephesians is to explain the mysteries of Christ. And this letter will indeed help us with a better understanding of what it means to work.

In our passage today we start out with a state of the human condition before Jesus. Chapter two says, “You were once dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live. You didn’t know any better. You used to live the way the world lived. That’s the way all of us lived and didn’t give it a second thought, but then something happened. God stepped in and offered us something better.” The burning question from this passage? What does better look like?

First, a Salvation that is Not of Works: Becoming a follower of Christ. It’s not by our own doing. Some people think that they can win God’s favor and impress Him with their goodness and good works. But **Romans 3:23** tells us the sad truth “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God...” We are all in the same predicament. No matter how hard we try to live up to a set of rules, to be the best person possible, we still fall short. We might be able to do ENOUGH of some things and not ENOUGH of other things. That’s what we call empty religion.

To be a follower of Christ is to know what comes next in our passage. “You are not able to do that. You can never be good enough or do enough. Because we can’t achieve our own salvation, we need to understand God’s plan. Vs 8-9. “For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves--it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.”

What in this world is this GRACE of God? What does this mean? Grace is the unmerited or undeserved favor of God.

It means that God DOES give us what we DON’T deserve.

It's not exactly easy to comprehend this idea. It's counter to the way the rest of the world thinks and operates.

Unmerited and underserved favor. A little boy was late coming home from school every night. He was always late for supper and finally his parents got fed up and said, "Son, if you don't get here on time this afternoon, you won't get any supper."

That day sure enough, he got home late. Later than ever actually. At supper he looked at his plate. There was a slice of bread and a glass of water and nothing else. He knew this was the consequences he deserved. It was his own fault. He looked at his father's plate, heaping with roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy.

His father waited for the full impact to sink in and then without a word, he took the boy's plate and placed it in front of himself. Then he took his own full plate and placed it in front of the boy. Then he smiled at his son. The message got through. Years later his son said, "All my life I've known what God's grace is like by what my father did for me that night."

What would you have done here? I'm sure there are some of us that would have said, "Let the kid eat the bread and water." Just like the father here knew he could make a more lasting impact another way, God's grace does the same for us. And that's what the Ephesians hear. "God gave that kind of grace to you. God supplied everything--even the faith needed to believe in the gift of God."

Grace has a companion called Mercy. Think about how often these two terms are packaged together in the Bible. Just in verse 4 today we heard, "But because of his great love for us, God who is rich in MERCY made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by GRACE you have been saved." Grace and Mercy. They go together, but they are different.

In GRACE, God DOES give us what we DON'T deserve.

In MERCY, God DOESN'T give us what we DO deserve. (Let me repeat that)

The next better that we get from this passage is this. God Does For Us What We Can't Do For Ourselves: Our faith, our conversion, our eternal salvation is not by any natural abilities or

merits of our own. “Not by works lest anyone should boast.” God wants to do this. God is glad to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Did you know that there are people out there who think God is out to get them? You can spot them when they say something like, “Oh well, I’m going to hell anyway so why try? God is out to get me.” There are people who can’t forgive themselves and can’t believe that God can forgive them. Still others don’t want to “bother” God. Church family, we have a God who takes great pains to work with us. God is in it with us for the long haul. As 2 Peter 3:9 says, “God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”.

The final better we get from our passage is this. God’s Purpose is for Us to Be Productive: Works may not lead to salvation, but they are still valuable. Verse 10 of Ephesians doesn’t just mimic a Brooklyner and say “forget about them.” Instead it says, “For we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to DO GOOD WORKS which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Salvation is not an invitation to say, “Why bother to do good works if I don’t have to--if it is not necessary in order to get to heaven? If our salvation is based on faith in Jesus Christ, then what good are good works anyway?” You see, when we realize who we are in Christ and what was done for us through his grace and mercy, that demands a new attitude. It calls for a sense of thankfulness that moves us to action. That moves us to do good works.

This week we celebrate thanksgiving and if you’re like our family everyone will answer the question, “What do you have to be thankful for”? When we realize what we have in Christ, the best way to be thankful is to let good works flow. It’s not something that needs to be “cooked up like a turkey.” Enthusiasm for work isn’t something that has to be manufactured. It’s just there. We just WANT to do good works. To be fruitful, productive followers of Christ. And boy does God have good works for us to do.

What are the impacts of these good works? **Ephesians 4:12**, “to prepare God’s people for WORKS of service so that the body of Christ may be built up.” Our good works will build up the body of Christ.

Good works flow out of thankfulness for what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. What we couldn't do for ourselves. We have been saved for a purpose. Not to SIT at the sidelines, but to be PRODUCTIVE. To build each other up.

In his sermon, The Marks of the New Birth, John Wesley's explains the standard of Christian living, "A Methodist is one who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him; one who loves the Lord with his heart, mind, soul, and strength. Rejoices evermore, prays without ceasing, and in everything is full of love to all mankind, and is purified from envy, malice, wrath, and every unkind affection. His one desire and the one design of his life is not to do his own will, but to do the will of Him who sent him.

He keeps all of God's commandments, from the least to the greatest. He follows not the customs of the world, for vice does not lose its nature through becoming fashionable. He fares not sumptuously every day. He cannot lay up treasures upon the earth, nor can he adorn himself with gold or costly apparel. He cannot speak evil of his neighbor any more than he can tell a lie. He cannot utter unkind or evil words, nor does corrupt communication ever come out of his mouth.

He does good until all men--unto neighbors, strangers, friends, and enemies. These are the principles and practices of our sect. These are the marks of a true Methodist. By these alone do Methodists desire to be distinguished from other men."

Thankfulness for what Christ has done in our lives should move us to work, to action--to produce good deeds and fruit that will last. What a worthy purpose.

Let's repeat our purpose statement one more time. **POWERPOINT SLIDE**.

Welcoming, Learning, and Working. This is us, St. Johns Church Family. This is Us. Let us pray.