

Ephesians 2:10

8/9/26

For we are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

For what purpose did God make you? God's Word clearly teaches "created in Christ Jesus for good works." Your purpose, my purpose, is to do good works. But what good works? Specifically, what is God calling you to do? This is between you and the good Lord. And your vocation from God changes through different stages of life.

Yes, most societies define worth by success, achievement and status. Jesus teaches that every Christian has "Community Purpose." **When we commit our lives to Christ we become Christ's body on earth by the power of Christ's Holy Spirit.** Jesus' resurrected body is in Heaven, and yet His Holy Spirit works through us as Christ's presence on Earth. We have incredible, miraculous purposes here and now.

Let's hear how to discover our God given talents in 1Timothy 4:6-16.

The image that God's Word paints through Paul is that we are the living breathing body of Christ here and now. Paul uses the image of the body in Romans 12 and 1Corinthians 12. Just as different parts of our bodies provide different functions to live well, so each of us have different functions to offer to the body of Christ.

How do you discover how God has uniquely gifted you? If you have not heard of the Ignatian discernment process, I highly recommend practicing this spiritual practice. Ignatius is the founder of the Jesuits or the society of Jesus. **To discover your gifts and to make impactful life choices Ignatius believes we must closely listen for the voice of Jesus.** Thus as God's Word teaches us in Timothy, **prayer and worship become the center to hear Jesus' calling.**

As I preached last week many of our problems and anxieties stem from disorder. Ignatius insists that we must have our priorities straight to hear Jesus' calling. What is the greatest commandment from God? Deuteronomy 6:5, the Shema or in Hebrew "Listen up! Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength..." The first priority then is Jesus. All other priorities are subordinate and lower than responding to God's love as Jesus Christ. Marriage? How does this respond to Christ's love. Family? How does this respond to Christ's love. The next job? How does this respond to Christ's love. Serving the Lord is the goal of life, then all other priorities are set on how best does this serve the Lord.

Ignatius would also remind us not to confuse the means with the end. Many seek jobs for money and only later realize they need to use that money for the service of God (Some never do.). You will hear God's voice much more clearly when you ask "What are my gifts to serve the Lord?" (the end) and the Lord will provide the means (money).

Ignatius believes for making decisions and finding one's gifts we need to take at least 20 minutes to quiet our inner self in prayer to hear Jesus' voice. We must come to Jesus in prayer with an open, generous and courageous mindset. Open minds and hearts attempt

to come to God with abandoning attachments of preconceived notions of what we already want. A generous mindset for prayer is to be open to whatever God might call us to do. It's like generously writing a blank check to God. Finally, to hear Jesus' voice takes courage because we might not like what God asks us to do. Think of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane making the decision to give His life for ours. Think of Paul spending years in prison to spread the love of Christ.

Setting God as the ultimate priority, not confusing the means with the end, setting time for prayer, and coming to prayer open, generous and courageous gives what Ignatius calls "interior freedom." It's in this *interior freedom* that we can clearly hear Jesus' voice for what God has uniquely gifted you and to make decisions that will best serve the Lord.

But we don't enter this process once, hearing Jesus' voice is a continued prayer life in which we closely monitor our feelings. Has the decision brought joy, peace, faith and hope, a feeling that you are moving in the direction of God or has the calling brought anxiety, restlessness, sadness, emptiness? To test this even before the decision we might ask, "What would it look like if you were giving this advice to a friend?" "When you are on your deathbed and reflecting back on life, how will the decision look?"

Christ's Holy Spirit equips each of us uniquely to build Christ's Church, how are you best serving God?

More and more we are hearing how social media is bad for our mental health, partly because we are constantly comparing ourselves to one another. And this is especially true for our youth. Instead of comparing ourselves, let us encourage and celebrate the gifts that we see in each other. Let us encourage each other to use their gifts in service of God and neighbor. This is Jesus' purpose for us.

Theme: Christ's Holy Spirit equips each of us uniquely to build Christ's Church.

Sermon Notes:

1. What purpose did God make you for?
2. Societies define worth by success, achievement, or status. Christ measures significance differently. Every Christian has Community purpose regardless of age, profession, income, or stage of life.
3. Discover where God has uniquely gifted you.
4. Use your influence as a calling rather than a possession.
5. Encourage others to use their gifts rather than comparing yourself to them.