

As One At 10

27th June 2021

Ephesians 2 verses 8- 10

What do you want to be when you grow up? Or...if you are already a grown up...what did you want to be?

I distinctly remember being asked that question when I started at secondary school – we were in a new tutor group, hadn't really had a chance to make friends yet and the teacher asked us to tell the class what we wanted to do when we grew up. I was very confident at the age of 11 – I had two options. I wanted to be an Opera Singer or a Nanny! I knew I loved singing, and I didn't know any other music except church music and opera (my Dad was obsessed) and I liked small children.

Its funny how things turn out – I've done lots of singing in my life though never professionally and certainly not opera and whilst I tried Nannying I discovered quickly it wasn't really my thing and ended up spending most of my working life with teenagers instead! God knows what he is doing...taking my early ideas about my passions and using them in his way, for his glory and purposes!

Let me read to you the few verses from Ephesians that we are going to spend a few moments thinking about today.

Ephesians 2 vs 8- 10 *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

You and I are GOD'S HANDIWORK or as some versions of the Bible say, his WORKMANSHIP. We are created by him, beautifully and wonderfully for his glory. But more than that, the Greek translation of this word basically describes us as a work of art, or a masterpiece! I wonder if you often think of yourselves in that way...I know I don't...in fact I often wish I was different in lots of ways whether it be in what I look like or in how I act – never satisfied!

Think about social media for a minute or all those adverts on tele which tempt the watcher to be something different to that which they have been made or all those selfies that people put out that are crafted, and filtered to show their best self. Well, when God made you as you are...you are already a work of art...and he is continuing to shape you into the person he wants you to be.

Last week I had a couple of days on retreat in the Cotswolds and I spent a whole day walking in beautiful surroundings and in glorious sunshine – God’s creation sparkled in the sun! I was surrounded by flowering meadows, meandering brooks, shady woodland and glittering lakes. It was utterly beautiful. I don’t know if you have ever been on a walk that has left you amazed at God’s creation and awestruck at the detail and beauty around you. Of course his world is amazing – from the tiniest insect, to the hugest snow-capped mountain! Stunning...but NOT his Masterpiece!

Human beings are the pinnacle of God’s creation – the best of his handiwork, and God’s ultimate Masterpiece is every human being who has become a follower of Jesus, and who has been made alive in Jesus. The Bible describes the Christian as a New Creation – Born as a Baby in His Image, but then born again as a Jesus follower – God’s ultimate workmanship and Masterpiece. Made in his Image, but also made to WORK FOR HIM – **Christians are His workmanship working for him** and each one of us is being shaped for his service as we grow to know him better each day.

These few verses remind us that we can’t make ourselves a masterpiece by ourselves...we don’t craft ourselves into a work of art by doing kind things, or going to church, or by doing our chores without complaining. Those things are all good but we know we fail when we try in our own strength to be good and get things right. To be shaped into God’s Masterpiece we simply need to receive the gift of his grace in Jesus and believe in him and trust him and live our lives working for Him rather than for ourselves. Jesus has done everything so that we can be saved and given a new life with God – all we need to do is say thank you and receive it then allow him to continue to carve us into the man, woman and child of God that we are called to be.

We are GOD'S WORKMANSHIP WORKING FOR HIM

When we do the works that God has called us to do, we become more and more his workmanship, shaped into his likeness and more and more our true selves. It's much more than just dreaming dreams about what we want to do when we grow up! Working for Him is a sign that we belong to God. Yes, we are a work in progress always changing and growing and sometimes through the most painful of times, but as children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus we are always being shaped into His likeness whatever we go through.

Michelangelo was once asked what he was doing as he chipped away at a shapeless rock. He replied "I'm liberating an angel from this stone." That is what God is doing with us. We are in the hands of the great Maker, the ultimate sculptor who created the universe out of nothing, and he has never yet thrown away a rock on which he has begun a masterpiece.

So, what does it mean for us to work for Him....and not ourselves?

We are to believe and to trust in Jesus, and submit ourselves to Him, let Jesus shape our lives and to be the voice that we listen to and the good Shepherd that we follow. We are to walk with Jesus, bear fruit for Him, and let Him equip us that in everything we might please Him.

Sometimes it feels so hard, and yet how quickly we forget that Jesus didn't create a completed Masterpiece and then leave us in a dark and dusty attic to rot. He is always in the process of making us more beautiful for Him and He left us with His Spirit....His constant presence to help us, to walk with us, to encourage us and to support us every step of the way so that when we serve Him, work for Him we will never be alone.

We all have dreams of things we would like to do and be (like my opera singer passion), and we all have gifts that God has given us and it blows our minds that God has stuff for us that He has already prepared for us to do. As we step out and serve Him, pray, and study His word we discover more of what those things are and how He is shaping us for future ministry.

Some of us are bakers, teachers, good with numbers, story tellers, and listeners, good friends, musical or artistic. All the gifts you have are given

by God and for you to use to work for Him. And whatever age you are, and whatever the task to which he has called you, you will be equipped for it in every way.

So please, let him shape you even if it feels a bit painful at times and use what you have for Him – let him continue to make you a masterpiece as you serve him and please never think that you have nothing to offer because God doesn't make mistakes in his artwork! Come and talk to me or to Tim or a friend about how you might serve, what you might do, where you might use your gifts and let others in the church family encourage and help you. You will be surprised and amazed at how God uses you when you step out for Him and maybe you will discover gifts you never thought you had and the confidence to use them for His praise and Glory.