

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Ephesians 2:1–10**

**Sermon: “Created in Christ”**

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul suggests God’s plan is unity and restoration (the instrument being Christ and the means being forgiveness of sin). All humans are to be in fellowship with him and with each other. The church is meant to be a living display of God’s original plan for humanity. This church includes Jews, Greeks, barbarians, learned, unlearned; all belong to one family in Christ.

All people come from the condition of spiritual death. Already in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms, a life of disease, sin, alienation, captivity, or under the rule of one’s enemies was seen as a life in the realm of death. Just as Christ moved from death to the glorious resurrection, so entrance into the church is a passing from death to life.

We are in a state apart from God as sons and daughter of disobedience (children of wrath).

I love the story about the teacher explaining to her class how a thermos works. She told the children: “You can bring hot soup to school for lunch, and the thermos will keep it hot. The next day you can bring a cold drink to school, and the same thermos will keep it cold.” One doubting but clever little boy asked, “But how does it know?” Good question.

Good question this morning also. “How does it know?” How does the community around us know we are Christians? How do you know that I am a Christian? Maybe I am in this job just for the money!

***“Transgressions and sins,”*** v 1: To get the full impact of the text, we need to look how Paul introduces this powerful passage, starting with v 4. He tells his readers they used to be spiritually dead in disobedience, in captivity, under the rule of God’s enemy, alienated from the Lord, sick to death with sin. Sounds pretty bad. If we want to know where we are going, we need to know from where we came.

No exceptions ***“all of us,”*** v 3: This means God’s people in the OT, Jews and non-Jews. In case you think this refers to some ugly neighbor or a relative we don’t mention, Paul says all of us are in the same condition by nature. Not a user-friendly introduction to a conversation when making an evangelism call.

Someone else rescues: What is the most serious life-threatening experience you ever had? It must be a personal experience when you knew you could do nothing—someone else had to rescue you.

***“But”***: Hold it, Paul says. Contrast that terrible fate with the surprise that God himself in Christ Jesus rescued us from certain death. He ***“made us alive”*** (v 6). Another word for “made alive” is “quicken” just as at creation. It is the same thought. God breathed new life into us, made us new persons, quickened us.

To make this great news even more dramatic, Paul adds further explanation of this rescue. He says, ***“and raised us up with Jesus”*** (v 6). We just cannot think of the great blessings God gives us without including the resurrection.

There is a tradition that when St. Augustine (354–430), one of the great church fathers, was greeted in the street by a former mistress, the newborn Augustine ignored her. She called out, “Hey, Augustine, it is I (giving her name).” He replied, “But it is no longer I. It is Christ.” Prior to his conversion, Augustine was a cultured, civilized, wicked man. After his conversion he became a great Christian theologian. A primitive Australian Aborigine tribe translates conversion as “given a new heart by God.” Right on target.

It gets even better: “*Made alive, raised up, and seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.*” What a surprise. It is mind-blowing to think God does this for us you and me.

What prompts us to do nice things for others? We like to know why people do nice things for us. Are our motives always pure? What prompted God? It is important that troubled sinners, doubting sinners, sinners feeling guilt, sinners with a bad conscience, are reassured that the new life in Christ Jesus has absolutely nothing to do with their suitability. It is always a free gift prompted by God’s incredible, boundless love, mercy, and grace (v 5b).

When did all these exciting things happen to us? For most of us God acted in our lives before we were old enough to know it. God acted in us through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and still keeps us in that covenant.

Today's society suggests there are always some essential requirements for success degrees, certificate, license, natural talents, etc. This is also creeping into our Christian experience. Popular theory promotes the idea that self-love and self-esteem are essential Christian virtues. Paul strongly counteracts this belief in v 8.

***“Gift of God.”*** Never get tired of repeating this thought. Imagine how worried we would be about going to heaven if it depended even a little bit on our goodness. Grace is more than God's undeserved love for us. It is his undeserved love in action.

“It,” the world around us. How does the world around us know that God has done all these incredible things for and in us? If you were wondering when I would get to my sermon theme, here it is.

V 10: God did all this so that by our good works, by our sanctified life, by the things we do and say, the world will know we are his children. The wonderful message of salvation by grace spelled out so clearly in today's text does not stand by itself. We are created in Christ Jesus for works. God did not save us to sit back and relax, basking in the sunshine of salvation by grace. Spiritual atrophy would quickly result. A long time ago he planned that others should see Christ in us, in our good works.

Our Christian life is part of God's purpose, for it is a reflection of the very Christ within us. That's serious stuff. Why are we God's children? To let the world see and know what the grace of God can do. Great masterpieces are not created to be stored away in vaults. We, the crown of God's creation, are purposely on display all the time, so that people will "see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven."

The commercial world talks about “product placement.”

Manufacturers try to get their products seen in movies, on television, at ball games, everywhere. We are the sanctified products of God’s gracious plan of salvation, which he puts on display all over the world. Be the best product you can be for him.

Paul never forgot the sheer outrageous joy and astonishment of the moment when God surprised him. He was never the same again, displaying in his life what the grace of God truly is. “Go for it” in the name of Christ, letting the world know what God has done for you.

Amen