

**“GRACE TO DO GOOD.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

**June 16, 2019, 10:30 AM**

**Scripture Texts: Titus 2:11-14; Ephesians 2:10**

**Serve Theme and Text, Titus 2:11-14.**

The Serve theme this year is Go Do Good and the Serve Theme text is Titus 2:11-14 where we hear this call to be eager to do good.

What is this eager to do good business, who is zealous for good works? Who does that, who wants to work? And who pays to come to some strange place to work for strangers? Where does this eagerness to do good work come from?

I remember driving in a Kansas snow storm to go see a girl. I was motivated by love to see her. In the midst of the storm I slid off the road into a snow filled ditch, I was buried up to the windows. A guy in a pick up truck stopped (God bless guys in pick up trucks). He pulled me out and I offered to pay him for his trouble. He told me to just help someone else in their time of need. And about 20 miles later that opportunity presented itself and I was able to help someone who needed help.

I was glad to do it, motivated by the love and grace and generosity I had received. That experience changed my entire outlook. Helping others was no longer an inconvenience or a delay to my plans.

That experience is a very small microcosm of what we have all experienced and what our text reveals. There are multiple reasons given here to motivate us, even compel us to be eager to do good. Let's look at them in our text.

The *first* compelling reason is that the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all who believe.

Most of us know the Bible teaches we are not saved by good works and that's wonderful news because if it wasn't true we would be in seriously deep weeds.

*Good works make a terrible savior*, because you can never know if yours are good enough or if you have done enough of them.

Good works are not our savior, obedience is not our savior, good morality is not our savior, living up to the expectations of those around us is not our savior. We have only one Savior, He is Christ Jesus the Lord.

We know from Romans that we are justified or made right with God not by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. We know that Jesus' work on the cross is what removes God's wrath toward our sin and reconciles us with the Father.

Salvation came when the grace of God came.

Will God love you or like you more because of the good work you do this week? No. He can't love you more than He has already loved you in Jesus.

It is like a human father and a child. When a child does something really good that pleases the father, well, it pleases him, but it doesn't change his love. His love is all in. He loves with the same love regardless of what the child does.

For the child's part, the purpose of going something good is not to win the father's favor or approval, but to show his own love and gratitude.

Now, yes, I know that our human love is faulty and there are parents who give or withhold love and affection based on what the kids do, but that kind of love is not godly or God-like. That's why some of us have trouble as adults understanding and accepting God's love for us in Jesus.

We know that we can't add anything to Jesus' work, His work is sufficient. There is nothing we can do to earn or deserve or get God to love us and forgive us and accept us. He does all that through Jesus, and we receive it simply by faith, by trusting in Jesus.

Good works are good when they flow from grace and as a response to the grace given to us.

But there is more, a *second* compelling reason for eagerness.

When we ask the question, why did Jesus die on the cross, what is the common answer? To save us from our sins. That's true in so far as it goes, but if that is all we say then really the answer is wrong.

Jesus didn't die on the cross just to save us from our sins. The revelation of God's grace to us in Christ and manifested supremely on the cross is to have more far reaching implications.

Remember the simple summary of the Gospel: Saved from God, saved by God, saved for God.

We are saved from the holy wrath of the Father, by the cleansing blood of the Son, so that we might be filled and used by the Holy Spirit for the glory of God and the good of others.

**Titus 2:12, 13b-14** ... training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ... Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are *zealous for good works*.

The death of Jesus does far more than just save us from our past sin. By His resurrections He defeats the power of present sin, He transforms us, changes us, delivers us from living by and for the flesh to living by and for the Spirit.

Be careful to notice that faith always comes first and the good works follow, never the other way around. We are saved by grace alone, but the grace that saves is never alone. It isn't a dead end street, but it goes somewhere.

The Christian life is all grace, it is all by grace through faith in Jesus, it is all by the grace of the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts. It is first and foremost God.

**I Corinthians 15:10** By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

**Philippians 2:12b-13** ... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

There is a *third* cause for eagerness to do good and it has to do with our future.

13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

We aren't just eager because of the incarnation and the resurrection, we are eager because of the Second Coming and the glory to follow.

First, there was the appearing of grace and eagerness to show gratitude for God's great grace. Then there is the appearing of a future grace and eagerness that flows from our hope for the great glory to come. Both of these should get us out of bed every morning.

And when you get out of bed, make Jesus the focus and the motivation of all you do that day. For your Serve students, this is why your morning devotions will be so crucial, the time in the Word and in morning worship. Fix your eyes on Jesus and not on yourself. Fix your eyes of Jesus and what He has done for you and let that be your motivation and strength. If you make what you experience this week a habit and pattern for your lives, it will change how you view every opportunity to do good.

What God's grace has begun is leading to something glorious.

**Philippians 1:6** And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

God never starts something He doesn't finish. He never quits or gives up half-way. If God has taken hold of you in Christ and has begun to form you into Christ likeness, then He will finish the job. In spite of our sin, our resistance, our rebellion, He will see it through, however painful the process might be for us. We are the clay, He is the potter.

Hope leads us to eagerness to hear our Savior say to our work: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

*Fourth*, there is one more great compelling cause for eagerness. Something surprising.

**Titus 2:13b-14** Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are *zealous for good works*.

Paul says something similar after his great passage on being saved by grace:

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are his workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus for good works*, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

How long ago did you start planning and preparing for this trip? Your leaders floated the idea to you maybe last year sometime, you thought about it, talked to your parents, started working on getting the money together. Your leaders started looking at Serve sites, making calls, arranging flights.

On our end we started about four years ago to host a serve and then kept it going. For this one we have been working really since the last Serve week.

It is easy to see all the steps we have taken, all the things we have done, all the details and arrangements and think about it all entirely from a human perspective. Look what we

have done, look where we have got to. We all worked hard to make it happen and here we are. Good for us.

How long really has this been in the works? Longer than any of us have dared to think. God has been planning this from before the foundation of the world and what He has planned here and now has implications for when the world dissolves and eternity begins.

The good works that we are going to do aren't our idea, aren't our doing, aren't because of our great ideas and planning, they are God's idea, and He is walking us into them and through them.

If God was thinking about our good works, our purpose and place in life from before the foundations of the earth, what does that say about our work and the service we are about to do this week?

Our work matters to God, what we do this week matters to God, what we do with our lives matters to God. Jesus died for the sake of our good works. This is cause for great eagerness.

God has been thinking about you a lot longer than you have ever thought about Him. Your life is not random, it is not an accident, it is not a mistake, it is not unimportant. He has created us in Christ Jesus to be like Jesus and do the kinds of things Jesus did.

If you think just being saved and getting forgiveness is the only thing and all there is, you are completely mistaken about Jesus and the cross and what this life is all about. God has much more in store, that you should do good works, you should live in increasing Christ-likeness, you should grow in faith and love and holiness.

Because of Jesus and because of the supreme importance and significance of His death on the cross, we should give careful consideration to the good works He died for and the good works He prepared for us to do, thinking about them as He did even before the foundation of the world.

But what if we don't like what God has prepared for us to do from before time began? What if it is really hard, or painful, or not like what we see other people getting to do? What if His workmanship doesn't seem much like a masterpiece of creativity? What if the poem God is writing in our lives has some dark or hard parts?

Some of you have heard of Joni Eareckson Tada. When she was about 19 she was diving at a river with some friends and hit her head and broke her neck. She has been a

quadriplegic for over 40 years, completely unable to do anything for herself. How would you think about that?

In her book *A Place of Healing*, she describes herself as God's "poiema" (workmanship). "(God) has a plan and purpose for my time on earth. He is the Master Artist or Sculptor, and He is the One Who chooses the tools He will use to perfect His workmanship. What of suffering, then? What of illness? What of disability? Am I to tell Him which tools He can use and which tools He can't use in the lifelong task of perfecting me and molding me into the beautiful image of Jesus? Do I really know better than Him, so that I can state without equivocation that it's always His will to heal me of every physical affliction? If I am His poem, do I have the right to say, "No, Lord. You need to trim line number two and brighten up lines three and five. They're just a little bit dark." Do I, the poem, the thing being written, know more than the poet?"

<https://preceptaustin.wordpress.com/2012/09/24/poiema-greek-word-study/>

This applies to all work, however, menial or insignificant, all manual labor however humble, it is good work because it is God's work, it is from above, it is divine and should be done unto the Lord.

### **The Gospel according to Dad.**

All our lives and all our work has been purposefully prepared before hand by a master craftsman. Being a father is one of God's good works. He planned it for you thousands of years ago. He knows what He is doing and why.

It's hard work, frustrating, impatience inducing, anger promoting, but it is a good work and God is in it. Don't be short-sighted, take the long view and live for eternity. You are God's workmanship, God is always at work on you and in you. Your kids are watching.

Let them see the influence of Jesus in your life. They are watching so do imitable things that are good. If you sin in front of the kids, repent in front of the kids. The best parents are parents who model confession and repentance.

To all of us in all our callings, vocations and good works I say:

**Colossians 3:17** Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Colossians 3:23-24** Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.