

Christ Came to Sanctify Us

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Ephesians 2:1-10

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Sermon Theme: As we consider the question "Why did Christ come?" we are returning to Ephesians 2 once again with the answer – Christ came to make His people holy. He came to sanctify us. He came to make His people like Himself. He came to change our lives, came to be our King. Jesus came not only to save a people for Himself, but to purify a people for Himself. He came to bring us to God, and in bringing us to God, we are forever changed. And we're going to see that today in Ephesians 2.

I. Christ Came To Make Us Alive to God (Verse 5)

- Christ came to bring you to God! This is God's initiative towards you! We did not make friends with God – God made Himself known to us through Christ. Christ has made us alive to God! Through faith in Christ, we are friends with God, not His enemies. Christ came to make us alive to God!
- What does it mean to be alive to God? To now have a heart that loves the things that God loves. At one time our hearts were far from God, loving the things of this world – in love with sin, thinking that it would bring us lasting pleasure.
- When God opens our eyes and makes us spiritually alive, we find that our hearts desires have changed. No longer are we seeking to pursue selfishness. But we find that we love what God loves. Righteousness and truthfulness, purity and mercy, patience and grace. Whereas once those things were not our pursuit, now they are. We have a heart that beats for the things of God. We want to serve Him, we want to obey. Why? Because our hearts have been made alive to God. We know that He gives us His Word for our good, to communicate His promises, to communicate His commands for our lives. We receive His commands and obey them because we know that He is for our good.
- What does it mean to be alive to God? To have a heart that loves what He loves, and to be dead to sin. If we are alive to God, it means that we are dead to sin. Sin is no longer our master. We're no longer under the sway of its dominion. We died to sin, and now we walk in the newness of life.

“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11).”

- The penalty and power of sin have been broken. We're no longer enslaved. Christian brother and sister, you and I have power over sin of any kind. This has been brought about by Christ. Now we have the Holy Spirit's power to resist sin. Not only has He saved us from the penalty of sin, He's given us power over sin! We're no longer captive! Praise Him! We're no longer just following along with the devil's schemes. They've been revealed for what they are – shabby substitutes for real joy, found in God alone. We are dead to sin and alive to Christ!

II. Christ Came to Make Us Holy (Verse 10)

- When God saves a people for Himself, He sets them apart as holy. As His holy people, He sets us apart for holy works, for good works. Before Christ, we pursued our own selfish ends. But now in Christ, with our hearts changed, we want to live in such a way as to draw attention to Christ.
- Christ came to sanctify us – to make us holy. Growth in sanctification means that year by year, we will progressively grow to be more and more like Christ. And the fruit of that growth in Christ will be seen in good works, holy desires, holy ambitions, and holy pursuits.
- Whereas prior to knowing Christ we were simply pursuing the passions of our flesh, in Christ our lives abound in good, righteous, holy works. God prepared these works for us. He intends that we walk in them.
- There is a progression here. God saves a people, He makes them increasingly like Himself, and that will be seen and evidenced in the works of their lives. This has been God’s plan all along – that His people look like Christ.

“For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29).

- God doesn’t just save us, He intends that we are conformed to the image of Christ. He intends that we be “conformed.” That sounds to me like an action word, like a process – that something that looks one way is shaped and refined and molded to the degree that it conforms to another shape. That’s God’s plan for you, Christian. That you be made like His Son. That process is called sanctification.
- Whereas our justification, the forgiveness of our sins, is immediate and complete at regeneration, sanctification is a process. It’s a progressive process, all through our lives, becoming more like Him over time, from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18). Christ came to sanctify His people.

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9-11).

- Do you see the trajectory of growth in that verse? Paul is casting vision for God’s people here. Love is abounding, knowledge and discernment are growing, the approval of excellent things is expanding, purity and blamelessness are increasing, fruit-bearing righteousness is rising. And who is it that’s receiving the praise through our lives? God is! We grow in these things “to the glory and praise of God.”
- This is God’s intention for us - an increasingly holy people, a people who look like Him. That’s what Christ came to do!
- Questions to consider: Are you growing? Are you pursuing growth? Are you desiring to become more like Christ? Are you positioning yourself for growth in Christ, like reading and responding to the Word in your daily life, submitting to His Word, seeking to come under the Lordship of Christ in all of your life? Christian, this is God’s intention for you.

- Christ's coming ushered in a new era of the help of the Holy Spirit to enable you to grow and change. He has given us a Helper, and this Helper, the Holy Spirit, has come to shape us into His image. The Holy Spirit has come to make us Holy. This Holy Spirit has taken up residence in every believer. The Holy Spirit gives us power to fight against any prevailing temptations. The Holy Spirit reminds us that Christ broke our bondage to sin! Christian, you are dead to sin! The victory is ours in His name! May the Holy Spirit help us to remember that and walk in that truth!

“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” (Philippians 1:6).

- Today we can have great hope, great confidence because what God starts He finishes! What He says is what He will do. God's character, His nature, is to be faithful. He's not going to carry you part of the way only to drop you off at some point. No, take courage this morning, dear Christian.
- Though the battle may wage, though the defeats may seem to far outweigh the victories, though the waves continue to crash on the shore, you can be sure of this – that He who began His work in you will finish it. The One who called you into His marvelous light will see you home. He who began a good work in you will see it done. He will get us safely to the celestial shore.
- Don't grow weary in doing good. Don't grow weary in confessing your sins. Confession and repentance are good for our souls. They agree with God and turn away from sin. If we don't repent of our sins, how do we expect to change? God is at work, shaping your heart through His Word, changing you one degree at a time, for His glory and our good. That's what we celebrate in this season of Advent. God sent Jesus Christ into the world to save a people, and God sent Jesus Christ into the world to make a holy people. And He is committed to seeing that accomplished. Will you gladly participate with Him in that work?

Conclusion:

- Christ has come to sanctify us – to make us like Himself. In order for Christ to make us like Himself, we first had to be made alive. We were dead in our sins. And that's why we celebrate Christ's coming – to be our Redeemer who took the punishment that we deserve, in our place.
- But that's not the end of His work in our lives. Christ's death and resurrection broke the power of sin and death over us; now we can live fully for Him.
- Since the power of sin has been broken, He has cleared the pathway to victory over everything that formerly ruled us.
- As we daily submit to Christ, as our Lord, He progressively makes us more and more into His image as we follow Him as Lord. Through faith in Christ, we now have the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to help us in our Christian walk. Christ is concerned with the way we live – either as a reflection of Him or as a reflection of something else. This is good news, because Christ has come to give us abundant life – life to the full!
- Christ our King has been born. Christ our King came to conquer death and sin, and came that we might flourish under His righteous rule. We were trapped in sin and enslaved to our passions. We were under the influence of the world. But Christ the King came to save. He came

to bring us to God. So that we would know God and be like God! And Christ the King came to make us like Himself - Praise Him!

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Consider taking time to read Ephesians 2:1-10 out loud. What observations/insights do you have from reading the text?
- We heard a sermon last week on justification and this week on sanctification. Christ came in order that we might be justified and sanctified. The New City Catechism explains these two words and ideas. Read the question and answer below. Then take a few minutes to consider: (1) What is justification (2) What is sanctification

Question 32 What do justification and sanctification mean?

Justification means our declared righteousness before God, made possible by Christ's death and resurrection for us. Sanctification means our gradual, growing righteousness, made possible by the Spirit's work in u

- What does it look like practically for us to simultaneously rest in our justification and pursue sanctification?
- Jeremy asked: "Are you growing? Are you pursuing growth? Are you desiring to become more like Christ? Are you positioning yourself for growth in Christ, like reading and responding to the Word in your daily life, submitting to His Word, seeking to come under the Lordship of Christ in all of your life? Christian, this is God's intention for you." How would you respond to these questions? In what ways do you see God's grace in your life helping you to pursue sanctification? In what ways do you want to grow in your pursuit still more?
- Looking ahead to 2024, what are some of the "good works" (see verse 10) that you would like to pursue? As you answer this question, consider thinking in terms of the different spheres life -- the home, the workplace, the community, the church.
- Consider taking time to pray, asking God to help us, by His Spirit to both rest in our justification and pursue sanctification--with all our hearts!