

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020**  
**Glynde Lutheran Church**  
**Sermon on Ephesians 2:8-10**

**Theme: “We have been saved not by *good works*, but for good works”**  
**“God’s purpose for us”**

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“For *it is* by God’s grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God’s gift. It is not by *your works*, so that no one can boast *about it*.

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God planned for us to do, in order that we may walk in them (*Eph. 2:8-10*).

***Introduction:***

I’d like to begin this morning by telling you the story about something that a woman by the name of Natalia Dmytruk did. She was born in the Ukraine to parents who were deaf, and as a result she grew up knowing sign language as virtually her first language. When she became an adult, she was employed as a sign language interpreter on the state-run television station in her home country of Ukraine.

In 2004, what became known as the Orange Revolution happened in the Ukraine. In that year, the presidential elections were held, and most of the people were eager for change.

They had put up with massive corruption and governmental abuse, and they hoping for big changes in the country.

However, the voting was rigged to make sure that the existing power structure continued, and the challenger Victor Yushchenko declared the loser, *even though the people knew that he had massive support from the nation*. On the night, when the fraudulent election results were announced, Natalia Dmytruk was on the roster to convey the message in sign language. Her face and her hands appeared in a little box at the bottom of the TV screen, to convey what was being said on the TV screen to the deaf viewers.

As the news of the fraudulent election was being announced by the TV presenter on the big screen, Natalia Dmytruk was signing a different message in her little box at the bottom of the screen. She announced with her sign language: **“I address all the deaf viewers: Yuschenko is our President. Do not believe the electoral commission. They are lying. Go to the Independence Square tonight”**.

The crew in the news studio were unaware of what she was saying, and nobody there noticed a thing. But the deaf population of the Ukraine headed to Independence Square along with their family and friends, and before long the Orange Revolution was on its way.

It led to the declaration that the Presidential vote was invalid, to a new vote, and to Victor Yushchenko being installed as President. Natalia Dmytruk was later awarded the Fern Holland Award in 2005 for her bravery: it is awarded to women from around the world who have made a difference.

***Part 1: “...not by works”***

Now, I suppose you're wondering why I've begun this morning with this story.... Well, because it's a good story, *which I first heard on Philip Yancey's DVD on prayer*, but mainly because it provides a great illustration of what I want to say in the first part of my message this morning.

The big screen picture in our society proclaims that it is through our works that we'll make it with God, *if there really is a God up there*. In our society, most people believe that if you are a good person, *if you do enough good works*, you'll be right with God. The common belief around us is that if the number of ticks *or gold stars* on your score-card in heaven exceeds the number of crosses *or black marks*, then you'll be right with God.... And that's most people, according to common understanding, *except the really bad people like Hitler and Stalin and so on (cf. my experience at funerals of unchurched people)*.

But what does Paul say here in his letter to the Christians in Ephesus, in echo of Jesus. He writes:

**“For *it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift. It is not by your works, so that no one can boast about it (Eph. 2:8-9)***

Paul here emphasises what Jesus taught again and again: that we are “saved”, and “put right with God” not by what we do, *“not by works”*, but as a free gift from God. God offers us His forgiveness and a new life now as His child, and eternal life with Him after we die *for free!* Sure, it cost God plenty: the suffering and death of His Son, Jesus, on the cross.... But all this is free for us! We don't have to earn, and we can't earn it! All we can do is to put out our hands to receive, *and that is what “faith” is!*

We need to constantly stand up for God and shout this out to the people around us. We need to be like Natalia Dmytruk. Sure, the message on the big screen is that we're OK with God because of our good works, but we need to constantly stand up *like Natalia Dmytruk* in the small screen and shout out:

**“They've got it wrong. The notion that we can be saved by our good works is a lie. The only way that we can be saved and be right with God is through accepting what God has done for us through Jesus. So called ‘good’ people don't go to heaven, only forgiven people!”**

## ***Part 2: "...but for good works"***

Just because we are saved "by grace" and as a free "gift, "not by good works", though, doesn't mean we can sit back and do. Far from it! Listen again to what else Paul says:

**For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God planned for us to do, in order that we may walk in them (Eph. 2:10).**

When you and I were baptised, *when we were first linked to Jesus as our Saviour*, we became new people. And we go on being new people, as we trust in Jesus as our Saviour. Sure, we might not look much different on the outside, but within us, we have "the Spirit of God", who transforms our whole being (1 Cor. 12:13; cf. 6:19).

Listen to what Paul writes elsewhere:

**If anyone is in Christ, *that is, joined to Christ*, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17).**

Or as Paul put's it here:

**For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...**

Created for what?

**"...for good works, which God planned for us to do, in order that we may walk in them".**

What "good works" is Paul talking about?

The good works of "love"! Paul emphasises this again and again in his letters. For example, he writes:

\* **"What matters is faith that works through love"**

And my favourite:

\* **"Be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ. Since you are God's dear children, you must try to be like him. Your life must be controlled by love, *lit. "walk in love"*, just as Christ loved us and gave his life... (Gal. 5:6; Eph. 4:32-5:2).**

Our purpose as God's children is to love like God loves, and like Jesus loved us! That's why we have been "saved", *rescued by God*, so that we might live our life as He wants us to live our life, and as He planned for us human beings to live our life: in a life of loving service of others. And who is our model, our example, as to how to love? Jesus!

I know you are probably sick and tired of looking at this slide from Pastor Harry Wendt's *The Divine Drama*.... But it sums up our life as God's saved, forgiven children so well (TDD 1C).

We who are God's people are those who gather around Jesus, the Servant King, who gave his life for us on the cross to rescue us, and who was raised to life again on the third day. We who trust in Jesus as our Saviour are new people, *new creations*, people in whom the Spirit of God lives. And we who are God's forgiven children are called to live our life in loving service of others, *like Jesus*.

Jesus is here depicted washing the dirty, filthy feet of a disciple, *which he did on the night before he died (John 13:1-17)*. He took off his outer garment, put a towel around his waist, and did the task of a servant: washing the feet of his disciples.

As someone once put it, "We are the people of the towel" (*Aub Podlich*). That's what God calls us, His children, to do: to be people of the towel. He calls us to use our time, talents, and treasure, *all that He has given us*, in loving service of others: by sharing the good news of God's love and forgiveness with them, helping those in need, caring for the sick, visiting the lonely, feeding the hungry, and so on (*cf. Luke 18:35-43; 19:1-10, esp. v. 10; Matt. 8:1-4; 25:34-40*).

Or as another great servant of the Lutheran church of Australia, the song-writer Robin Mann, puts it:

**Low the way is low,  
with the man whom angels praise;  
he who spoke the sky  
was a baby dressed in hay:**

***We are companions of  
the one whose name is love,  
we share his life as we grow.  
we carry Jesus' death  
with each and every breath –  
our hope is high, the way is low (SLH #857).***

### ***Conclusion:***

May God bless each of us as we live in the grace, *the mercy* of God, knowing His love and His forgiveness through Jesus, and being new people, *new creations of God*, people who are led and guided by the Spirit of God within us.

And may God bless us as we praise Him and serve Him, loving others with our whole life: with our time, our talents, and our treasure, *following Jesus, God's Son!*