

2010 Living Our Legacy: Our Human Legacy - “Called and Gifted”

*You are who you are through this **gift** and **call** of Jesus Christ! Rom. 1:6*

*God's **gifts** and God's **call** are under full warranty—never canceled, never rescinded. Rom. 11:29*

We've discussed and discovered over the past couple weeks part of our human legacy: we are loved and created by God; we are fallen and forgiven by God. Today we'll consider the fact that our human legacy includes being Called and Gifted. In some ways these are the 'yin/yang' of the Christian faith; the being and doing of our human existence. If being fallen and forgiven are two different sides of the same coin, being called and gifted help us identify the two major portions of our humanness: What we are called to be...and what we are gifted to do.

It's important to see these two factors coexisting, and important to not separate them. Far too many believers have become satisfied and complacent knowing they are in a right relationship with God. Being a believer, for them, means just believing right things; while it sometimes ignores doing the right things. For some others it's all about what we do, and has little to do with the source or center, or motivation from which we do things. If we are all just nice, get along, help grandmas across the street, then that's all that's really important.

As you're going to see today, these two factors ought not be separated; we are called and we are gifted. Let me explain further, and let me use another verse to help us see this more clearly:

*Through him we received both the generous **gift** of his life and the urgent **task** of passing it on to others ...who receive it by entering into obedient trust in Jesus. Rom. 1:5*

1. WE ARE CALLED INTO A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

*But now, God's Message, the God who made you in the first place, Jacob, the One who got you started, Israel: "Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you. I've **called** your name. You're mine. When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you. When you're in rough waters, you will not go down. When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end - Because I am God, your **personal** God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I paid a huge price for you: all of Egypt, with rich Cush and Seba thrown in! That's how much you mean to me! That's how much I love you! I'd sell off the whole world to get you back, trade the creation just for you. Isaiah 43:1-4 (Message)*

*Hosea put it well: I'll **call** nobodies and make them somebodies; I'll **call** the unloved and make them beloved. In the place where they yelled out, "You're nobody!" they're calling you "God's living children." Isaiah maintained this same emphasis: If each grain of sand on the seashore were numbered and the sum labeled "chosen of God," They'd be numbers still, not names; salvation comes by **personal** selection. God doesn't count us; he **calls** us by name. Arithmetic is not his focus. Romans 9:25-28 (Message)*

Part of our human legacy is to join God in a personal saving relationship. I'm so glad that God's calling to us is personal. For many centuries before Jesus, God's relationship with human beings maintained a fairly "professional" nature about it. If one were able to keep the rules, and not break too many laws, and bring the right sacrifices, and keep the right religious holidays; then you could rest somewhat confidently that you were in favor with God; a fairly "professional" relationship.

The problem is we know that most of us can't keep all the rules, can't mend all the fences, can't maintain all the right practices...so we find ourselves on the outs with this 'distant' God, while yearning for something different.

Jesus is that difference. He came to earth as God's Personal invitation, God's personal "Emmanuel", God's personal envoy; to invite, instruct and inspire us to receive this personal call. God doesn't call us professionally anymore; God calls us personally, by name, by individual name. God is not satisfied being the God of Israel, or even the God of the Gentiles...God wants to be your God, and my God. It's a personal call. God doesn't just call people into ministry; God calls all of us, first to a Himself, and only later to ministry. So get this in your heads, part of our human legacy is that we are called by God to be one with God. OK?

2. WE ARE GIFTED FOR A PERSONAL MINISTRY WITH GOD

*"We are intimately linked in this harvest work. Anyone who accepts what you do, accepts me, the One who sent you. Anyone who accepts what I do accepts my Father, who sent me. Accepting a messenger of God is as good as being God's messenger. Accepting someone's help is as good as giving someone help. This is a large work I've **gifted** you for, but don't be overwhelmed by it. It's best to start small. Give a cool cup of water to someone who is thirsty, for instance. The smallest act of giving or receiving makes you a true apprentice. You won't lose out on a thing." Matthew 10:39-41*

*Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then **called** us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has **given us the task** of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's **representatives**. God **uses us** to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. **We're speaking for Christ himself now**: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you. How? you ask. In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God. I Corinthians 5: 16-21*

Here is one more scripture I found interesting:

*Just think—you don't need a thing, you've got it all! All God's **gifts** are right in front of you as you wait expectantly for our Master Jesus to arrive on the scene for the Finale. And not only that, but God himself is right alongside to keep you steady and on track until things are all wrapped up by Jesus. God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of his Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that. 1 Corinthians 1:6-8*

Part of our human legacy; when once we've begun our personal relationship with God, is to join God in the joint effort to save the rest of the world. We've heard often in these last few years that it is not America's job to be the policeman of the world. In more recent days we've heard from some countries and some within our own country; "why is it America's job to save the rest of the world?" In our overwhelming response to the tragedy in Haiti, some have questioned our motives, like we are taking over this little country. Some have questioned our priorities, sending money to this little backwoods island, when we have such ghettos and slums and unemployment at 10%, and universal health care issues to deal with at home.

I'm here to tell you part of the reason that we are the world's policeman, and part of the reason we are the world's 'savior', is that we are gifted to be just that! God has blessed this American nation, partly at least because of our original attempts to found and build this nation upon Godly principles. And as far as some are convinced we've abandoned those principles; I don't think God has abandoned us. Nor has God abandoned the call that comes with being given so much. Call it our Christian National Heritage or call it our human good will; but what we are doing in Haiti, and what we are doing in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other places around the world are all part of answering God's call on us as a nation.

I know it's hard to think with a national identity sometimes, so let me break it down further. When we as individual, personally called by name, individuals, receive the relationship God has for us; then we are gifted to share that good news with others. Not all share the stage with Billy Graham, or even this humble preacher; but by the ways we live, and by the actions we observe, and by the attitudes we maintain; we are Christ's ambassadors! Did you ever want to be an ambassador? Well, you are; not to some foreign or exotic land, but to the family in which you were born, in the workplace you earn your living, in the circles of friends and influence that make up who you are...you are an ambassador for Jesus Christ. And before you freak out thinking about all that might mean, rest assured; that God has gifted each of us, to make us equal to the task to which he has called us.

So there you have it, being and doing. Being the Son or Daughter of God that God personally calls each of us to be. Then, doing that which God has gifted us to do. I'll explore more of the specific gifts next week, but it is enough for today that God has given us whatever we need to accomplish the task that He has put before us. And I'll leave us with one more, longer scripture:

Who in the world do you think you are to second-guess God? Do you for one moment suppose any of us knows enough to call God into question? Clay doesn't talk back to the fingers that mold it, saying, "Why did you shape me like this?" Isn't it obvious that a potter has a perfect right to shape one lump of clay into a vase for holding flowers and another into a pot for cooking beans? If God needs one style of pottery especially designed to show his angry displeasure and another style carefully crafted to show his glorious goodness, isn't that all right? Either or both happens to Jews, but it also happens to the other people.

Isaiah had looked ahead and spoken the truth: If our powerful God had not provided us a legacy of living children, we would have ended up like ghost towns, like Sodom and Gomorrah. How can we sum this up? All those people who didn't seem interested in what God was doing actually embraced what God was doing as he straightened out their lives. And Israel, who seemed so interested in reading and talking about what God was doing, missed it. How could they miss it? Because instead of trusting God, they took over. They were absorbed in what they themselves were doing. They were so absorbed in their "God projects" that they didn't notice God right in front of them, like a huge rock in the middle of the road. And so they stumbled into him and went sprawling. Isaiah (again!) gives us the metaphor for pulling this together: Careful! I've put a huge stone on the road to Mount Zion, a stone you can't get around. But the stone is me! If you're looking for me, you'll find me on the way, not in the way. Romans 9:19-33

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