

“Set Aside and Sanctified”

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August 8, 2010

Text: Hebrews 10:11-18



Jesus has made you perfect for a purpose. Let us pray.

Lord God we pray for a perfect worship this morning. We pray for perfect thoughts in our hearts and minds, perfect clarity of speech, perfect focus upon your Word. Father, by the power of your Holy Spirit, we ask that you reveal your purpose to us this morning so that we might be led to it and consecrated for it. We ask all these things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you drive out to Western Nebraska to the town of Alliance you can see a structure known as Carhenge. Carhenge is a sculpture built to look exactly like Stonehenge, exactly to the same dimensions, but instead of 25-ton rocks, Carhenge is constructed from old cars—38 of them piled up on top of each other. I stopped at Carhenge once on a mission trip and we all agreed it was really a great sight and pretty fun way to kill half an hour on the prairie of Western Nebraska. But as you stood there admiring the Grand Am grandeur you couldn't help but wonder "Why?"

We have spent a lot of time talking about the Jerusalem temple this summer and we have examined it from nearly every direction, but we have not asked "Why?" Why force 183,000 men to spend years building? Why spend 167 billion dollars filling it with gold and cedar and silver and bronze? What was its purpose? Was it for worship alone? Was it a memorial? Did God just want a really, really good looking building?

This is not just some idle question, a historical curiosity. It's important because our hearts are God's new temple, and if we understand why God would go to such lengths to build the Jerusalem temple, we will better understand why He would build His new temple in our hearts.

Exodus 29:43-46 is the mission statement for the temple: **There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.**

The purpose of the temple was to sanctify God's people.

Now, what is sanctification? Sanctification is one of those fifty-cent theological words that don't you see much outside of the Bible. Try ordering the sanctified salad the next time you go out for lunch or ask the cashier if the pants you are buying have been sanctified. Be ready for a look.

Sanctification quite simply means "made perfect by God for a purpose."



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Everything in this world is either an instrument or a monument. Everything is either a testimony to something that used to be or a tool to make the world the best it can be. Jesus' promise is that if we are in Him, if He is our Savior, then we are made perfect for a purpose, His instrument to make this world all it can be. Jesus specializes in taking people of low and mean estate, humbled people, broken and sinful, and making them perfect instruments for His perfect purpose.

In the old temple, of course, sanctification had to happen hour by hour, day by day. Hebrews 10:11 teaches, "**And every priest stands daily at his service repeatedly offering the same sacrifice.**" But, if we are in Christ, if Jesus is our Savior and Lord, we have been sanctified, our sin has been set aside for all time, the records lost and we have been given permanent purpose:

Hebrews 10:14-17, "For by a single offering he (Jesus) has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you are, right now, as you sit here, sanctified, made spotless and perfect by Jesus' blood. You are set apart for a purpose, permanently separated from your sin. God does not keep a record of our sins.

Here is the problem, sin, in the human spirit, is tenacious. It lingers. It loiters. God does not keep a score card of sin but we tend to. So do others. Lingering sin fills our life with lies. Lingering sin makes us feel un-useful for God, mediocre and mundane. You may be saying this morning "My sin is too great for God, too deep to undo." That may be your perception but it is not God's reality.

Sound too good to be true? Don't trust me, trust God's infallible Word. If Jesus is your Savior, you are made perfect.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:19-22

Being sanctified and living like we are sanctified are two different things. If we feel mediocre, un-useful, unsanctified we are probably not living the sanctified life. We are living the sinner's life and there is an eternal difference between the two.

What would you do to serve God? My friends, Jesus has made you. You are made perfect for a purpose.

Make no one ever ask *Why* God built His temple in you.

Notes:



¹ Lutzer, p. 20

The Gardener and The Vine

By Andrew McDonough

On a wild, lonely hill, on a thin, scraggly vine, lived a branch named Basil. Basil never visited anyone, and no one ever visited Basil, until the day the Gardener came.

The Gardener looked up and down the vine. “Basil!” he said. “You’re exactly the branch I’ve been looking for!”

Basil looked over his shoulder to check if there were any other branches name Basil nearby. No, the Gardener was talking to him.

“I have good news and bad news,” said the Gardener. “The good news is you’re going to grow lots of grapes.” “Excellent!” said Basil. “And the bad news?” “I need to cut you off this scraggly vine.” “Oh,” said Basil. “I think you’ve got the wrong branch.” “Trust me, Basil. I’m a good gardener.”

Basil thought about the bad news. Then he thought about the good news. “Okay, then,” said Basil. “I’m in your hands.” So the Gardener took his clippers and...snip!

He placed Basil into his bag. “This is the end!” cried Basil. “No,” said the Gardener, “this is just the beginning!” Down the wild, lonely hill they climbed, away from the thing scraggly vine, across the hot, hot desert, over the snowy mountains, through the jungly jungle, and into a beautiful garden. And there stood a magnificent Vine. “Wow!” said Basil. “Now that’s a vine.”

“Basil,” said the Gardener, “I have good news and bad news. The good news is you’re going to grow plenty of grapes. The bad news is I need to cut the Vine.” “No!” said Basil. “You can’t cut this magnificent Vine!” “Trust me, Basil. I’m the Gardener.”

The Gardener took his clippers and...snip! He cut deep into the Vine. Then the Gardener took Basil and placed him deep into the cut in the Vine. And the Gardener wrapped tape around and around, joining Basil and the Vine. “This is the end!” cried Basil. “I’m going to die!” “No,” said the Gardener, “this is a new beginning. Get ready to live!”

Then a new strength and a new life surged through Basil. “Basil,” said the Gardener, “meet the Vine.” “Welcome, Basil,” said the Vine. “I have good news and great news. The good news is you’re now a part of me.” “And the great news?” asked Basil. “We’re going to produce plenty of grapes,” said the Vine. And sure enough, that summer Basil and the Vine produced plenty of grapes, thanks to the Gardener.

If sin were no obstacle, if the word can't was wiped from your vocabulary and you placed yourself in the hands of the Gardner and allowed Him to graft you into the vine—what great God-given, fruit-bearing dream would you reclaim, a dream that may have once pounded in your soul like thunder, but now is only a whisper.

What are they? First, the sanctified life dwells with God. **Exodus 29:45, “I will dwell among the people of Israel and be their God.”** How do we know if we are dwelling with God? When we dwell with God we feel courage. When we try to hide from God we feel fear.

Last Sunday I took Calvin to the Dinosaur exhibit at Union Station. He is getting into dinosaurs, mostly the cute, cuddly and furry kind—like Barney. The Union Station dinosaur exhibit consists of giant-sized, realistic, animatronics dinosaurs. You see a Triceratops move his head and a Diplodocus munch on some wild grasses. A Velociraptor waves his claws in the air. I also learned how much trouble a three-year old has distinguishing reality from fantasy. What should have been a delightful day with Dad became a house of horrors. We were only a few minutes into the exhibit when Calvin pulled on my hand and said, “We’ve got to get out of here.” I tried to calm him but he was insistent that we were in grave danger. When we came around the corner and he saw the Tyrannosaurus Rex flex his jaws and let out a mighty roar he took off like a shot through a crowd of onlookers yelling, “He’s going to eat me! He’s going to eat me!” I grabbed him and we sat down on a bench, with him the whole time looking nervously over his shoulder and I tried to explain to him what was going on. “Calvin, they’re not real. They’re made from rubber.” I said. “They are real. They are right here in front of us. We’ve got to get out of here,” he said as his eyes darted around the room. “Yes, but they’re not alive,” I said. “But they’re moving,” he astutely observed. “That’s because a machine inside them is moving.” He looked at me intently for a minute and I thought for a second that my master parenting skills had paid off. Then he said with no less panic in his voice, “We’ve got to get out of here.”

What is real? The Greek philosopher Plato said that this world is not real. Paul told the Corinthians that an idol to which someone makes an offering of food or money or blood is not real—but that did not stop them from worshipping it.

Strictly speaking, Calvin is right. The dinosaurs were real. They were right there in front of us, moving and you could put your hand out and touch them. But they were not real in the sense in that they were dangerous or could do any damage to us at all, unless, of course, we let them scare us to death! When we dwell with God we know that He is real and our sin is not. Every time God calls someone to dwell with Him from Abram to Moses to Mary to Paul, He makes them a promise, “Fear not, I am with you.” **Haggai 2:5** commands, **“My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not”** If our sin seems more real than God, if we are running from rubber dinosaurs, then chances are we are living the sinners life rather than the sanctified life.

Second, the sanctified life worships God alone. The sinner’s life bows down to idols. When we worship God alone, we feel free. Exodus 29: **“And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them.”** When we worship God

alone, we feel free. When we bow down to other gods, we make ourselves a slave.

What is the first commandment? Most of us know, “You shall have not other gods before me.” Exodus 20:3 But that is incomplete. The first commandment commanding us to worship God and God alone is predicated upon the clause that He set us free. **“I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.” Exodus 20:2-3**

There is nothing more freeing than worshipping God alone—even if worshipping God alone places us in man-made chains.

In Nazi Germany as Hitler rose to power, the vast majority of the Church went along with his programs. A minority of God’s people formed the Confessing Church movement which stood courageously against the Nazis and this small leaven proved themselves more trouble than the Nazi’s cared for. Hitler called in some of the leaders of the Confessing Church to meet with him. Among them was Martin Niemoller a Lutheran Pastor. Niemoller told Hitler that he was there only out of his concern for the church, the state and the German people. The Fuhrer responded, “You take care of the Church. I’ll take care of the German people.” The evening continued but as Niemoller left he made his position clear, “You said that ‘I will take care of the German people.’ But we too, as Christians and churchmen, have a responsibility toward the German people. That responsibility was entrusted to us by God, and neither you nor anyone in this world has the power to take it from us.”¹ Hitler did not respond. Niemoller’s home was ransacked that same night, days later a bomb exploded in the Church. Not long after Niemoller was thrown into prison where he stayed for eight years. You may say that Niemoller was a fool, that he would have been better off just keeping his mouth shut and his head down rather than risking his life and spending nearly a decade in prison. But Martin Niemoller knew who set him free. Years later he said, “For it is, and must remain, the case that we must obey God rather than man.”

When we don’t worship God alone, we make ourselves a slave.

If you read on toward the end of Hebrews Chapter Ten, you come across some startling teaching. Right after assuring us that we have been made clean, after promising us that we may approach the throne of grace with confidence, we are taught the consequences of consistently and persistently bowing down to other gods, we create for ourselves an inescapable prison, we knit for our hands and feet unbreakable chains:

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God. Hebrews 10:26-27, 31

The life of sin, for a moment, seems to set us free. In fact it seems we have the best of both worlds, because Jesus’ love is perfect and eternal we are saved from judgment but we can go on sinning and doing exactly what we want. This is one of the questions I get the most, if I know I have been saved no matter what I do, then what is to stop me from sinning? It’s the ultimate loophole!

Don’t mistake a loophole for a sinkhole. I don’t presume know to the eternal fate of saints who live as sinners. But I do know that saints who live like sinners suffer a consuming fury of fire in this world, if not the next.

Third, the sanctified life serves God. The sinner’s life serves itself. When we serve God, we feel peace. When we serve ourselves we feel empty. Serving God invites the Holy Spirit to live in our life and fill our heart.

Exodus 29:44, I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests.

Hebrews 10:14, For by a single offering he (Jesus) has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Because the Holy Spirit left the Jerusalem Temple and was poured out and lives in the heart of everyone who confess Jesus as Lord and believes in their heart that God raised Him from the dead, we are all priests of the Living God. It is not anything we have earned or to which we must aspire, it is a reality that we are compelled to live up to.

John Newton, the former slave ship captain who became a pastor, struck blind, and wrote the great hymn Amazing Grace wrote about sanctification:

Thus under the Gospel, every Christian has been a common vessel for profane purposes, but sprinkled and anointed, he becomes separated and consecrated to God.

We are not separated from our sin by what we do; we are not sanctified by what we do. We are separated and sanctified by Jesus’ blood to do. We give because Jesus gave for us. We serve because Jesus served us. We love because Jesus loved us. We forgive because we are forgiven. We are graceful because we are grace-filled. We do good deeds because Jesus first did a good deed for us.

Jesus taught His disciples: **You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. John 15:16**

The number one thing stopping us from serving Jesus is that we don’t feel we have anything to contribute. We don’t feel equipped. We don’t feel able. We have too much going on, too much coming down, too much holding us back.

In reality we are perfect.