



Sunday, March 14, 2021
Ephesians 2:8-9

Pastor Chris Marien

Our Way of Life

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

In the early months of the pandemic, after a time to figure out which way was up and what direction could possibly have any forward motion to it, I decided to jump into a deep clean and organization of files at home. Mortgage paperwork, tax returns, insurance documents, all the files important to our lives. And after several days, I took stock of our home life and wondered about what projects have been left off the list because there was just not time. One of those projects was a DMV request for a new license plate for our Honda Accord as the plates, apparently when they were made or maybe because of the salt use in Wisconsin, had lost all the coloring on the lettering. And so 15 minutes and \$4.99 later – I had ordered new plates. When they arrived, I went out the same day and put those plate on the car. Shiny new plates. Dressed up the car just a little bit. Later that same day I went to Pick ‘n’ Save. Finished my grocery shopping and walked outside and into the row of cars I thought I had parked my car in. Except I could not find my Accord. I pushed my cart to the next row of cars – and there I found a black car but not a Honda. I was so sure, that I had parked in the first row of cars so back I went. I walked towards the black Honda Accord in that row – but the numbers on the plate did not match the numbers I remembered. And so I walked on, pushing my cart, to the next row of cars – actually believing my car might have been stolen. In the third row I found what I found in the first two rows of cars – nothing. And so back to the center row of cars – where my eyes fell on the same black Honda Accord. Where was my car? It did not dawn on me that the accord I was standing in front of was, in fact, my car until I saw the disposable masks hanging from my rearview mirror. Frustrated. Yes. Embarrassed. Absolutely. Did I look around to see if anyone had noticed? Yes. Why? No one pays attention most of the time to some lost soul in the parking lot. This is sometimes my way of life. Finding myself lost, confused, and often, without too much pain, figuring things out and moving on with my life.

I chose the reading for this morning because I think we are all in need of the reminder of what our way of life can be, should be, will be, and actually is when we follow God’s Word and the footsteps of our Savior in this life.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing;
it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast.*

What way of life are you traveling these days? Who are you becoming? Where do you belong? What are you doing to change the world? I wonder do you ever ask those questions? Maybe not with those exact words – yet, those moments can linger in our hearts and bounce around our heads. Who am I? Where do I go to be known, to be loved? What am I doing, what can I do to change the world? In the body of Christ, when the people of God gather together, I wonder if you ever hear answers to those questions? My hope is that you do. My cynical side says – probably less than you should and hardly ever with great clarity.

When the Apostle Paul writes these words to the Christian community in Ephesus, he writes to people he knows. The Apostle Paul lived in Ephesus for three years working his trade, building a community of faith, and causing great challenge to the pagans who were connected to the Artemis temple. Paul spoke of the church as the body of Christ, a family household, a mystery. Next to Rome, Ephesus was the most important city Paul visited. Ephesus has been called the third capital of Christianity and we do not often find a Christian community more ready to receive and live out the Word of God and instruction from an Apostle as their way of life. All that being said - the words of Paul in the second chapter of Ephesians are rich with meaning for us.



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We, Lutheran Christians, believe that grace is a foundational and distinctive piece of the Lutheran faith and while the church may often use the word “grace”; and while you may hear the word sung in a pillar hymn of our Christian faith, I am not sure that we dive deep enough into it or create spaces to dwell in the idea and gift of God’s grace. This gift, undeserved and freely given, changes lives and perspectives as people realize they are enough because of what Christ has done and are called into the world to serve their neighbor and share the good news. What if that was your guide for your way of life?

The pandemic has taken many things away. Honestly, it has changed our way of life – at least for a time. For some of us, the pandemic has brought us into the deep, dark places of life – loneliness, despair, anger, grumpiness, cynicism, addiction, alcoholism, pornography, abuse, adultery, death – anything that offers an escape. Except that escape is no way of life – escape cannot sustain – cannot satisfy – cannot succeed for very long – escape can only tempt you to another quick fix and temporary solution. Jesus does not call us to that way of life. For too long, the world has promised such diversion and distraction, and delivered neither long enough to bring us peace or joy or contentment. There is only one way of life which offers all those things: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast.*

If you take anything away today, I want you to understand the fierce love that God has for you, just as you are, and that by grace, through faith, you have been saved. What would your way of life look like – what could your way of life look like, if you were to truly claim this reality as your way of life? If you were to trust your whole life to the promise of God that God’s grace alone is the gift that brings you all the things you hunger for – peace; joy; contentment; life. Just as God promised all along. Is today the day you let go of the way of life you have travelled, especially in the midst of these long pandemic days, to take your first step into the promised way of life God offers you each and every day? Maybe today is the day. Need help letting go? Need help with that first step? Let me know. We can do it together. Amen.