



**“What are good works in God’s sight?” (Q. 191, 2017 Catechism).** Last month’s article examined being saved by God’s grace through Christ. We discussed that we are saved by grace which gives us the “gift” of faith. For these blessings of the cross, we praise Christ our Savior! What happens after we are saved, that is, given the gift of faith? The catechism rightly asks the question above which draws our attention to the work God has created for us in advance (**Ephesians 2:10**). Faith is God’s gift as expressed in **Ephesians 2:8-9**. Verse 10 follows with what we do as a result of that true and saving faith. **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”**

First, we learn in **Hebrews 11:6**, that **“...without faith it is impossible to please Him, (God) for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.”** Our service to God is a fruit of the faith. The good we do flows from the cross of Christ who has blessed us with faith in Him as Savior. The good that we do flows from faith and faith is God’s gift to us in Christ. At the death of a believer, we pray in thanksgiving for the “grace bestowed in Christ Jesus, for the (persons’) adoption and rebirth in Holy Baptism, **and for all the good (the person) was permitted to give and to receive.”** God is the giver of all good gifts in Christ, both the forgiveness of sins and the good we are permitted to give and receive. The good works that God calls us to do are only done from a heart of faith which is given to us by God’s grace.

**Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” John 15:5.** This teaches that God has provided for our salvation through Christ and that He provides for us to do the good He has prepared for us. We also learn that by nature, we are unable to believe in Him nor do the good that God would have us to do. God desires our work in His kingdom (good works), not because He needs them. Instead, our neighbor needs them for his benefit. We serve our neighbor in our daily walk in the Baptized life of the Christian with the gifts and abilities God has given us for the good of our neighbor. The Catechism offer **“The Table of Duties** which teach our roles in various vocations in God’s Kingdom. Whether we are father, mother, grandparent, uncle, aunt, an employer, a worker, preacher or layperson, each vocation is God given and we are given various gifts as individuals to be used to the glory of God and for the furtherance of His Kingdom as we proclaim the Gospel.

We are indeed saved by God’s grace which gives us the gift of faith which then clings to Christ the Savior. We work in His Kingdom that others would know of Christ as their Savior, for it is God’s desire that all would be saved. Therefore, the work we do is a joy flowing from the natural desire to show gratitude to God for His grace while at the same time seeking to serve others. St. Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:17** **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”** A few Biblical examples are found in **St. Mark 12:41-44** when a poor widow offers two small coins demonstrating her faith in Christ. **St Mark 14:3-9** Mark gives the account of expensive perfume poured on the head of Jesus. While some complained about the waste of money, Jesus said **“She has done a beautiful thing for Me.”**

And Christians serve God and their neighbors in the various gifts, we are given by which we work in His kingdom. **Galatians 5:1, 16-24**

To be sure, the Holy Spirit first sanctifies us by bringing us to the Lord Jesus and we receive His gifts through faith, then the Spirit sanctifies us by strengthening our faith and increasing its (faith’s) fruit within our lives. God the Holy Spirit gives us the new desires so that we strive to overcome sin and do good works. Our good works do not save us, Christ has done that in His death and resurrection. But the good we do demonstrate our faith, show gratitude to God for His grace and serve God by serving the needs of our neighbor (Catechism Q.190, 2017 edition). As the hymn writer pens:

**Thy works, not mine, O Christ,  
Speak gladness to this heart;  
They tell me all is done,  
They bid my fear depart.**

**To whom save Thee, who canst alone  
For sin atone, Lord shall I flee?**

*TLH 380 “Thy Works,  
Not Mine, O Christ”  
verse 1*

In Christ,  
Pastor Ahrendt