

This week I was reading a popular news magazine and they called the last ten years the Green Decade. I'm sure you're all familiar with that phrase-ology by now but what they were talking about is that more people are involved in recycling than at any other time in history. Seven out of ten Americans recycle. They separate the plastic from the paper and from the glass and so on and that has been a popular trend that has been increasing this last ten years but the article mentioned that there was a new phrase creeping into our vocabulary – this phrase of repurposing. To repurpose is to take an item designed for one purpose and to mold and shape it and use it for another. I thought I would do some investigating on this term and just see how widespread it has invaded our culture. Come to find out that it actually is a term. It's creeping into our modern dictionaries. In fact, the dictionary definition of repurpose is to convert for use in another format. I went on to find out that repurposing is a multi-faceted, multi-billion dollar industry. It's really sweeping the change over from a discarding mentality or a recycling mentality to this new concept of repurposing. But I started to think long before it became popular in our culture God was doing this in humanity. God has been repurposing humanity. He had been taking that which was discarded by sin and He's been remolding it, reshaping it, repurposing it for a new purpose.

Now, you've read some of the scriptures on the side screens earlier in the morning. You read from Isaiah that said that our sin had separated us from God or you read later when the prophet said that those things that we attempt to do to appease God, to put ourselves before as if God could be won over by goodness. Those things are like filthy garments or a better translation – filthy rags. A word picture that might help you understand this is think if those rags that you have in your garage or your shop that you use to clean up spills and things like that; you throw over in the corner. That's what Isaiah is saying. Our best effort to please God, it's kind of like those filthy shop rags. Or think about Ephesians 2:1 that said we are dead in our trespasses and sin. Dead – that being the idea of that being like a corpse. We are dead to God. We could go on reading Romans 3. The idea is clear – that sin has devastated our relationship with God. But, it's a good thing that he didn't leave us in that condition. Instead, Paul in the book of Romans tells us something. He says in Romans 5:8 but God showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Think about that. While we were still like those filthy shop rags Christ died for us. While we were dead in our trespasses and sin, Christ died for us. While we were separated from God because of our unrighteousness the text tells us Christ died for us. It goes on to say since therefore we've now been justified by his blood much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

That word justified, interesting word. The word justified is a legal definition and it literally means to be declared right before God. To be declared right. He makes a declaration because of the cross of Christ, that now that separation, that gap has been closed. In Romans 4, verse 25 it says Christ was crucified and raised, resurrected for our justification. The question when you look over biblical scripture, look over the theology of the cross and the resurrection and the need of humanity is the question why? Why would God do this? Why would God send his only begotten Son for those who were far from Him; for those who could not live up to any kind of standard of morality or

righteousness? Why, why would God do that? There's one passage I want us to all turn to this morning. It's found in the book of Ephesians chapter 2. If you have your bibles I want you to find that passage. If you don't there's provided for you in the chair back in front of you and I want you to take that chair back bible and I want you to open up. You can find this passage on page 976. The reason why I want this passage opened on your lap on the morning is because it's the only passage you're going to need and you're going to be able to refer to it and come back to it. In fact, we're going to end the service with it. I might jettison for a bit and go out to other passages but you'll be safe if you can find this one passage you'll be able to follow exactly where we're moving in our repurpose thinking in Ephesians chapter 2. We're going to begin in verse 8.

Why would God bridge the gap with His own son, Jesus Christ? Verse 8 begins to tell us the reason. For by grace you've been saved. Now, stop there. Grace, the word grace. What does that mean? It's not a word we often use in our vocabulary. We hear about it but what does it mean? We talk about saying grace. We might call someone of royalty Her Grace but what does grace really mean? It comes from the Greek word *châris*. And it means unmerited favor. It means favor that is not merited by anything that we do, rather, it is given to us. It's the unmerited favor of God. You could translate this correctly in Ephesians 4 by the unmerited favor of God you've been saved. That would be a legitimate translation. You'd be saved by what? Through faith the text says. That's the conduit. You receive the unmerited favor of God through faith. You could say well, that's something that I must do. I must rise to this level of having faith in God. No, keep reading. Notice how we receive this faith. This is not your own doing. It's the what's the text say? Gift of God. So, your faith isn't something isn't something that rises up inside of you, rather it's something that God has given to you. It's a gift. Not a result of works so that no one could boast. Listen to what God is saying. He's saying I'm bridging the gap with Jesus Christ for you because you couldn't do it on your own. You wouldn't do it on your own. In fact, it requires this unmerited favor, this declarative righteousness that I'm going to present to you through faith. By the way, that faith I'm also going to give to you. This is what God does.

Still, we have to answer the question why. Keep reading. Verse 10 – for we are His workmanship. Stop there for a moment. Workmanship. Greek word *poiēma* - means to make; to create. We could push it to mean repurpose. We are God's repurpose; His workmanship. Remember, sin made us into something that separated us from God. Grace now, the text tells us makes us into something repurposed by God.

Do you realize how we've been repurposed in Christ? Do you realize the outcome of our repurposing? What He has given us. Let me just give you a few things. You don't have to turn from Ephesians but let me just tell you what the scriptures say. Three things; He's repurposed us for a new life, a new future and a new right now. Let's look at the first one. He's repurposed us for a new life. Scriptures tell us in Romans 6, Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father so that (that's a purpose statement), so that why? So that we may live a new life. Have you ever wanted to have a new life? Have you ever thought about that? It would be nice to start over. Have a brand new life; new career; new

job; new house. I'm not going to say a new spouse but you get the idea. Just start over. You know what God does? He says I understand that but I'm going to take it down to the base level and we're going to start from scratch. I'm going to give you a brand new life in Christ. He doesn't discard us. He doesn't recycle us. He repurposes us. He remolds us. He says I'm going to give you a brand new life in Christ. I'm going to take you out of the situation you're in that's inescapable which makes my mind immediately jump to our project in Cambodia. I think the reason why our hearts are so bent towards children who are orphaned is because we understand that they cannot get out of that situation. There's nothing in and of themselves. They don't have the ability to extract themselves from the condition they find themselves in unless we step into their lives. This is their life. It's the same thing with the Gospel unless God sends His son to step into our lives we would never be able to extract ourselves from sin poverty. This is where we would always reside. But He did. He stepped in. In fact, the scriptures go on to say that it's like darkness. It's inescapable darkness but Jesus Christ is the light and He makes the darkness disappear because of His light. He gives us a brand new life.

He not only repurposes us for a new life but he repurposes us for a new future. John 11:25 a passage that's going to be read all throughout around the globe today on Easter Sunday – it's the words of Christ. I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me though he die yet shall he live. These are really startling words. Think about them. Death is the inescapable reality that we all must face. We know that. We see it all around us don't we? It invades our home. It invades our family. It will invade our existence one day.

Thomas Harding in his book *Countdown* writes: The two ultimate questions of existence are these. Number one – has anyone ever cheated death? Number two – if he has did he make a way for me to cheat it also? And the answer to that question is yes. Jesus Christ is the one who overcame the power of the death. Death doesn't hold our future any longer. Christ does. Do you hear that? Christ holds the future of life so much so do you remember what Jesus said to his disciples just days before the passion week? He was entering into Jerusalem and he was saying the son of man (that's what he would call himself), the son of man must lay down his life, suffer and die. And he went on to explain the crucifixion to them. They didn't understand it. When they did start to have somewhat of an inkling of an understanding that their leader, their Messiah was going to die their hearts became troubled and he said in John 14, he says let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you I'll come again and I'll take you to myself that where I am you may be also. And he ends by saying I will not leave you as orphans. I'll come to you. Not only does he give us a future but he promises us a hope of a new home that we'll never be spiritually homeless again. That's the future because we are in Christ.

But not only has he repurposed for you a new future he's repurposed you a new right now. And that's critical to understand. When we talk about Christianity we often talk about things of the future – what God is going to do but we can't miss the impact of

Christ's words in John 10:10 when he said I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. The idea is life now. Paul said, oh that I may know him and the power of his resurrection. He says I want that same power; that power that raised him from the dead. I want that power in my life right now and that's exactly what Christ promises. He says you are powerless without me but I'm going to repurpose you and you are going to do great things through me. How, how is that going to happen? Well, go back to Ephesians – still open on your lap, right? Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10. We haven't finished it. Look at it. Verse 10 says for we are his workmanship; watch this, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Now, don't be confused. It's not saying that you begin a relationship, sustain a relationship with God by being good through your good works. That's not what this says at all. Remember verses 8 and 9. It is by grace, the unmerited favor of God through faith that you have a relationship with Christ. Do you understand that? Do you understand that if you came here today with this attempt to say well, I'm going to try my best this year; I'm going to start on Easter weekend and I'm going to try my best to be good and maybe God will shine his mercy and his blessings upon me. You actually just stepped out of the biblical realm of salvation and entered into a works based theology. I'm going to work myself to God. That's by the way, the standard concept of religiosity. I'm going to pull myself up. I'm going to do it myself. Yet the scriptures tell us just the opposite that if you come acknowledging your need, your hopelessness, your sense of sin poverty and you say help me. What does God do? God says I will do it for you. I will give you grace. I will give you the faith that you don't have. That's where it starts. And when it starts at that point it revolutionizes a life. It repurposes a life.

You say, well, what's that purpose for? It's a brand new purpose to be His workmanship. Don't forget. That's the key. You've been repurposed so that He can repurpose through you. Think what He's done. He's given you a new life, a new future, a new right now. That's a repurposed life. But He doesn't stop there. He says now you're going to be the center of my workmanship so that you can give others a new life, a new future, a new right now. I'm going to work through you to expand the kingdom of Christ.

What is this Cambodia Project have to do with Easter? Why did you pick Easter weekend? I think there is no better example of a faith lived out than one active in repurposing other lives. Why? Because our own life has been repurposed. There's no better example of faith, real faith than when it's faith in action. When we realize what has happened to us in Ephesians 2:8-9 and then we live it out in Ephesians 2:10 that's real faith. I think this might be the greatest Easter we have to experience because it's not just something that we come and mentally attach to or emotionally attach to but we put our entire faith sacrificially out and say use me God as you've repurposed my life to repurpose others.

You realize that right now there are Cambodian children, 5, 6, 7, 8 going to bed after a long day of scavenging for food, alone, without parents, existing in doorways and cellars and street corners, rummaging through the Battambang garbage dumps just seeking some

kind of meager existence; children caring for children. Lost, in poverty. Why do you think He has called you to himself? Why do you think He's repurposed you? Is it just to have the benefit alone? No. It's to be His workmanship; His hands, His feet to repurpose the lives of others. Let's celebrate this Easter – our great faith by repurposing that, living it out for the sake of someone else. Let's bow our heads together.

Heavenly Father I thank you for Jesus Christ and I thank you that we don't have to somehow measure up to some ethereal level of goodness but rather you come to us. You rescue us. You save us. We thank you for that salvation in Jesus Christ. But we don't want it to end there. We don't want it to just to be religiosity. We want it to be real and active so, use us. Repurpose us so that we might repurpose others. Heavenly Father, as we collect these financial gifts this morning I pray that you would use them. Take that which is broken, been discarded but yet redeemed and now use it in a way that would impact our society with the love of Christ. I pray Lord not for a blessing for us individually but may the kingdom of God be blessed and may it be expanded. In the name of Christ reach into dark places like the streets of Cambodia. We pray these things in the name of Christ. Amen.