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Yacolt EV Free  
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**Salmon or a Jelly fish?  
Ephesians 2:10**

Billy Crystal plays the part of a bored baby boomer who is employed selling radio advertising time. His son's school has invited all the parents to come for a day and tell about their work. So in the middle of the various fathers babbling on about their neat jobs, Crystal suddenly launches into a deadpan monologue as the children in the class stare drop-jawed in bewilderment.

Billy starts in; "Value this time in your life kids, because this is the time in your life when you still have your choices. It goes by fast. When you're a teenager, you think you can do anything and you do. Your twenties are a blur. Thirties you raise your family, you make a little money and you think to yourself, "Whatever happened to my twenties?" Forties you grow a little pot belly, you grow another chin. The music starts to get too loud. A girlfriend from high school becomes a grandmother. Fifties you have a minor surgery..that you call a procedure but it's a surgery. 60's you have a major surgery, the music is still loud, but it doesn't matter because you can't hear it anyway. 70's you and the wife retire to Fort Lauderdale. You start eating dinner at 2:00 in the afternoon, you have lunch around 10am and breakfast the night before. Most of your time is spent wandering around the malls looking for the ultimate soft yogurt and muttering, "How come the kids don't call? How come the kids don't call?" Do you kids have any questions?

Is that the truth? We laugh at Billy Crystals stereotypical life of mundane frustration because we see so much of it around us and even in ourselves. I don't think that is the sum of life that God planned for us when He in His divine creativity decided to place you on this earth, in this place during this time. I think we do squander a terrific amount of

opportunity to make a difference...but that simply is not what God had in mind when he created you and brought you to this place...right here in the foothills of the cascades to a little village named Yacolt. You and I were created for more than just going through the motions of life. We have been placed here at this time in history, in this place to make a difference and make an impact in the lives of people around us. We have been shaped by God, designer created for significance. Not for us. Not so we can boast about it. But so we can build up God's kingdom knowing that it is He that has created and vested us with significance called as children of God.

There are far too many people in our world that are bored with life. Folks there are far too many people that are bored with their life right here. Far too many people feel like they have little in their lives that is very significant or makes much of a difference about anything. Far too few of us have a sense of worth and purpose that is planted and delivered by almighty God. Far too few of us realize that we can be a part of something far bigger than the next episode of "Teen Idol". And God's word wants to restore in us our sense of purpose by implanting in us His sense of worth and purpose.

There are three basic needs. Three things all people long for; Transcendence, Significance and community. **Transcendence** is to know God and experience His power. Augustine said that within everyone our Creator has placed a God-shaped vacuum (not the thing that sucks up dirt from carpets but an empty hollow space) that only God can fill, and until that space in our life is filled with God life will continue to seem strangely unsatisfied and empty. People also long for **Significance**; to be a part of something with meaning, to make a difference. To be involved in something that has a purpose and a direction and is moving toward a goal. To have a reason to get out of bed in the morning. I sure want that...I don't mind working hard as long as I know what I am doing is

making a difference and will last longer than me. The third thing that people are longing for is **Community**. Connecting together with other people in meaningful relationships. Teaming together as each part works together for a unified goal that adds to the joy factor and delight as we see far more accomplished together than we could ever dream of doing as separate individuals. When God's people operate in biblical giftedness all three of those needs are met.

We are going to spend the next few months talking about spiritual gifts. Many people here may have heard of spiritual gifts before. Some would be absolutely stumped if asked "So what do you think your spiritual gift is?" Some might say, "Well, I can sing, I love to paint, I like to act out dramas and I'm a pretty decent tennis player" But when the Bible talks about spiritual gifts it does not mean our natural talents. These talents were given to all mankind by God in His common grace. When the Bible speaks of spiritual gifts it is referring to those gifts that were given to every new believer in Christ to minister in the body of Christ, the church in the area of the Spirit. That is why they are called spiritual gifts.

According to a nationwide survey, Barna Research reports that 88 percent of born-again Christians have heard of spiritual gifts, only 39 percent can identify a spiritual gift they possess and an even smaller percentage of believers are actively seeking to minister in ways which capitalize upon their giftedness. In fact, I believe our church has been guilty at times of jamming people into holes, into positions of ministry not because the people were gifted or felt particularly called but because they felt a need to fill a slot. I want to see that change. I would like this fall to be a time where the people who attend our church begin to learn about spiritual gifts. Upon learning about the gifts I would like to see every believer who attends here to begin the process of discovering their gifts. And then each individual would then meet with gift counselors and

talk through the specific cluster that person has been given and suggest a couple of ministries to try that might be a great fit to fulfill their part in God's kingdom. Once a fit has been made we would then follow-up 3 months later with that individual to make sure its still a fit or to allow that person to try another ministry that might be better suited. Too often our church has filled a slot and left them with no follow-up or feedback until they either burnout and give up or flame out and quit. I think its time we need to begin changing that.

So we begin our series on Discovering Spiritual gifts. As we do I think a great foundational place to start is to study the Bible passages that give teaching in this area. This morning we will begin with Ephesians 4:10. In fact, it makes sense to start even before that in Ephesians 4:8,9. So turn with me in your Bibles as we listen to God's Word. It is His most holy word so this morning lets honor His word as we all stand and I will read those three verses Ephesians 4:8,9,10. READ

Verses 8 and 9 serve to explain the incomparable riches of His grace spoken of in verse 7, on the prior description of our desperate destiny in the verses before that, "we were once dead in our transgressions and sin against God in the life we formally walked in apart from God. But God stepped in being rich in mercy because of His great love for us, gifted us with grace. Here in Ephesians 2:8 the allstar homerun hitter verse of the New Testament, "For by grace have you been saved through faith, not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works that no one should boast about it. Grace is the source of salvation. While mercy is God withholding punishment for that which I really deserve. Grace is giving us great benefit that we do not merit. It is God pouring down His riches on us namely salvation. Grace is not only gifting believers with salvation but it is also grace that empowers us for living right. It is the grace of God that saves us from sin and it is the grace of God that saves us for good works. This acronym for grace might help.

Grace: God's Riches And Christ's Enablement. By grace are saved from our sin-death destiny and also enabled with power to do great things being a part of God's team.

All this is done by grace, but through faith. Ahhh you might think then there is something I need to do..I have to do a work of faith in order to get saved. Let me be very clear with this. Grace is the source of salvation, that comes from God. Faith is the channel. God alone saves. Faith is not a work, it is a means by which we accept. Faith is the confidence in something or someone to accomplish something you cannot accomplish on your own. It is defined in the next line. Faith is confidence that someone will act on your behalf, "not of yourselves"

To boast in our faith would be like boasting in the fact that you reached out to take a check from somebody. Suppose that you have a tremendous debt but someone offers to pay it for you, and writes out a check for 650,000. And you reach out to take it from him. How absurd it would be if you then went around saying to everybody. "Check me out. Isn't it wonderful that I had what it took to reach out and grab that check? They might say back to you, "Wasn't it incredible that he paid that debt for you? If you were to reply. "Oh, he didn't do anything much; remember I was the one that reached out and took the check- how silly would that be? It is the resources of God, His grace that make all this possible. It is the greatness of God which supplies this richness of grace to us." (Stedman p136)

When we boast we deceive ourselves, pretending we are the ones that can save ourselves and not God. We think we can handle it. We do it our own way. We have forgotten how incredibly dependent we are. We have been saved by God and there is no work that we can do to gain salvation. God's plan is not a "get good enough to get God". That plan makes sense to our natural minds because that is the way life in this world works. You work hard you keep your nose clean, you usually reap

the benefits. But that is not the way God has chosen to make it work in the spiritual realm. No amount of good works that we can do are enough to gain the favor of God. No amount of Bible reading. Praying. Church attending, charity giving, volunteer helping, singing, Knock down doors evangelism is going to get us into heaven and saved from our desperate destiny apart from God. We may clean up our language, stop feeding our unhealthy addictions and curtail our anger filled rages....those are all good things to chuck out of your life, but you could filled up a tanker ship full of good works...and God says its not going to be enough. For apart from receiving by faith God's grace in salvation all the best stuff we do are like a box of filthy oily rags...like I have out in my garage. Our righteousness apart from God is like a filthy rag bag. We need to be freed from the "holy hustle" of thinking that I've got to do all these things before God will ever think about loving me. Salvation is a gift, a free gift of God. Not of works so that no one can walk around say. I finally did it. I got good enough to gain God's smile and satisfaction. It also follows that since we cannot be saved by our good works, we cannot be lost by our bad works. Salvation is of the Lord...not us. The faith that saves is more than an acknowledgment of facts. It recognizes that Christ died for my sins and washed me clean and that in Christ I can actually be declared righteous. Now for most of us that is an amazing thought. Some are sitting here thinking, "hold on. You don't know how bad I've been. You don't know some of the things I struggle with... You are telling me that God is going declare that I am pure and righteous? Yep. In Christ. God's word tells me that no matter how bad you've been or how much you have sinned. Those who come to Christ in faith, reaching out for that 650,000 dollar check of grace, regarding His promises as true without work...is the kind of faith that saves. Now that is amazing grace. Today may well be the day this happens for you when you say, "Oh. Now I finally get it."

So why did God bother to save us, to declare us righteous, to justify us. The question all of us ought to be asking is "So now what?" there was a minister out taking a walk on a beautiful street near the church. He noticed a small boy attempting to ring the doorbell on the porch of a house. The boy was short and the doorbell was higher than usual. The boy could not quite reach it. The minister stepped up to the porch beside the boy and reached up and gave the doorbell a strong ring for the boy. Smiling he looked down at the boy and asked, "So what are you going to do next? "Next? The boy said, we are going to run like crazy!"

After we have been saved we ought to be asking the question. What next? We were saved for a reason and it was not to become a Sunday morning pew slug that twiddles your years away passively listening and doing little of kingdom value and worth. Our conversion is not the end. It's just the beginning. Growing up attending school I always looked forward to high school graduation. Some of you seniors are probably thinking. Ahh this is it my last year and then FREEDOM. It's over! Graduation had always seemed like the end goal to me, then I realized what they call the graduation ceremony...commencement. That doesn't mean the end, to commence means to begin. It's only a beginning a launching pad of ultimate possibility and limitless opportunity. So too our salvation is a launching pad of limitless opportunity.

Look at verse 10 "We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for Good works!" That word workmanship is the Greek word Poiama. We get our English word poem. A poem demonstrates the creativity, thoughts, feelings and desires of the poet. We are God's work of art. We are an exhibition of His power...and God desires to continually paint into our lives His love and peace and joy and patience and character qualities. We are His workmanship and we continue to be his work in process created in Christ Jesus. Notice it does not say we were educated

in Christ Jesus, not trained, not repaired or cultured but created in Christ Jesus. The quality of the art depends on what? Not the quality of the materials used but the skill of the crafter.

Here is point number 2 this morning. Not only must we realize that our conversion is just the beginning. We can experience joy by doing what God has crafted us to do. We have great value and purpose and significance because we have been designer created by the Almighty God of the universe. His signature written across our lives brings us great value and purpose.

A couple months ago some of you may remember the article in the newspaper about the fellow working at an art museum on the east coast. He was assigned the task of going through some old storage rooms full of sub-priceless art pieces that had accumulated over the years. In the middle of a pile of average art he was surprised to discover what looked like a sketch of a column by Leonardo Davinci. There at the bottom was the signature of the master. The sketch on just a piece of paper was authenticated and appraised to be worth millions. The value is not in the material, but because of the one who created. We are God's masterpiece creation and are vested with great value and significance. This challenges us to pursue discovery and fulfillment utilizing what is already ours. We are created with a purpose for good works which God has designed a special plan for us long before the creation of the world. Isn't that amazing? I think too many of us have stuff our valuable creation away in some dusty storeroom for far too long. Its time we rediscover the poem that God has worked into the life of every believer and begin to experience the greatest joy we can have by doing what God has crafted us to do.

Let me ask you a question this morning. Do you picture yourself as a product of God's creative effort? Do you wake up in the morning look in the mirror and see yourself as being a piece of God's workmanship that

He has signed His name across your heart and life? Have you ever wondered why He created you the specific way that He did?

See I think some of us look at ourselves and say, "I really don't like the way God made me. I don't like the way that He seems to be shaping my life. I would rather be....maybe it's a more visible role. I want to be able to sing like an angel or play the piano great. I want to have lots of money so I can give and be a blessing. I want to be able to teach, or counsel or encourage. Some of us I think simply don't know what God has gifted us with and need to go back into our storage room for some discovery. Some of us need to renew an appreciation for how God has crafted us and then find a place that we can use that gift for His kingdom in an area that is fulfilling and brings great joy. For we will experience the greatest joy in doing what God has crafted us to do. He has a tremendous plan for each one of us

Look at the end of verse 10. He has crafted each of us for good works which God prepared for us that we should walk in them. Exercising your gifts is a walk not a run or a climb. It is a walk not a climb or a run or a struggle it is a walk. Are you walking, and operating in the gift that God has given you? Are you walking in anticipation to discover what that gift may be? Maybe you think your no good, too old, too young, no talents, no skills no chance that God would want to use you. Well, I've got some great news for you. The master craftsman wants to touch your life and invites you to join with him in making a significant contribution to the Kingdom of God if you will join him in His work.

Let me read an old familiar poem that reminds us of our worth. It was battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought it was scarcely worth his while, to waste much time on the old violin, but he held it up with a smile

"what am I bid for this old violin? Who will start the bidding for me? A dollar, a dollar, who'll make it two? Two dollars, and who will make it three?

Three dollars, once; three dollars twice, Going for three; but no; From the back of the room a gray-haired man came forward and picked up the bow.

Then wiping the dust from the old violin, and tightening up all the strings, He played a melody pure and sweet, as sweet as the angels sing. The music ceased and the auctioneer with a voice that was quiet and low said, "What am I bid for the old violin? And he held it up with the bow.

A thousand dollars, and who will make it two? Two thousand, And who'll make it three? Three thousand , once; three thousand twice; and going and gone, said he

The people cheered but some of them said, We do not quite understand? What changed its worth? Came the reply. It was the touch of a master's hand. And many a man with life out of tune, and batted and scarred with sin. Is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd, much like the old violin. A mess of potage, a glass of wine; a game and he shuffles along, he's going once and he's going twice, he's going and almost gone. But the master comes and the thoughtless crowd never quite understands the worth of a soul, and the change that's wrought by the touch of the masters hand