



In Christ, I Am ... One of a Kind!

Main Truth

God has uniquely created each of us as exclusive pieces of art. Each distinctive piece of art (each believer) reflects different attributes of God's heart and soul to the world around. Each irreplaceable piece of art has a unique function to perform as it shows Him to the world by its very presence.

Introduction

Years ago as I was wandering around inside the Denver Art Museum, I remember entering the floor containing art from the Asian cultures. The one thing that stood out in my mind as I was captivated by the intricacy, the detail, and the color was the word *time*. I couldn't get past how much *time* and patience it must have taken those artists to carve wood into a pattern that had the delicacy of lace. I just stood and marveled. What craftsmanship!

Since then, I have spent a lot of time thinking about artists and what they do—and why they do it. When an artist creates a painting, a sculpture, a carving, he births the finished piece somewhere within his heart and soul, long before it is ever completed. He works with his tools to bring about the masterpiece, never calling it “done” until his heart and soul resonate “it is so.” The finished product carries with it a bit of the artist's heart and soul, for it was out of these that the art was born.

When God calls us His “workmanship,” or *poiema* (from which we get our word “poem”), He is calling us a bit of Himself. He is reminding us of the *time* He has invested in our creation and is continuing to invest as He works on us—his pieces of art. And He will not rest from His work until His heart and soul resonate as He gazes at us, “It is so.”

Scripture

Ephesians 2:8–10 (New International Version)

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:8–10 in the New American Standard Version reads:

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

The Message phrases these verses like this:

For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it. God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.

And the Contemporary English Version, like this:

⁸ You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. ⁹ It isn't something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about. ¹⁰ God planned for us to do good things and to live as he has always wanted us to live. That's why he sent Christ to make us what we are.

For Discussion

In verses 8 and 9, Paul talks of our complete inability to add anything to our own salvation. As you think of a piece of clay that is being made into a piece of art, what are some words that you could use to describe its “job” as the artist works on it? For example:

It would need to *be still*.

It would need to *yield* to the process of creation.

After reading verses 8 and 9 (especially in the CEV!), we may start to wonder at our worth. After all, on earth we are valued for what we *do* and what we *earn*. If there is nothing that we can brag about, then where is our value? Paul quickly follows up this reminder that our worth does not lie in what we do, by reminding us that our worth lies in *whose we are*. This is a really difficult concept for us, though.

- Think back to your childhood. Can you ever remember a time when you were not rewarded (or punished) for what you did?
- How does the world constantly reinforce the concept that “We are what we do”?
- Take a moment to really ponder this truth: “Your value does not come from what you do. Your value comes from Whose you are.” Listen carefully to your heart. What questions and objections rise to the surface?

When God calls each of us His “workmanship” He is conferring upon you the worth and value that comes with being a one-of-a-kind piece of art created by a Master. The more rare the artwork, the more value it has. You cannot get more rare than “only.”

As His exclusive artwork, you are the only one that can reflect the bits of Himself that He put into you to this world. As each prism uniquely reflects the sun, so you are completely unique in personality, in upbringing, in place in life. Your reflection of Him to the world cannot be reproduced by a single other being—past or present—on this planet. How does this knowledge change your view of yourself? How does this knowledge change your view of another who is different from you (and perhaps gratefully so)?

- Discuss with your group the importance your life takes on if it is the only one that can give your specific reflection of God to the world.
- As a distinctive reflection of God to the world around you, how do even menial tasks such as going grocery shopping or mowing the lawn take on importance?
- Discuss as a group some ways that each of you enjoy showing love and care to those around you. Watch with joy as you see a beautiful mosaic of God’s hands and feet appear!

Application

Often, other pieces in God’s beautiful mosaic of Himself chafe us and annoy us. (For example, their ability to reflect His sense of order really grinds on our ability to reflect His sense of freedom.) The fact that God uses each of our unique reflections to present a more complete picture of Himself to the world calls us to give grace to those whose reflections are different than ours. Who may you need to extend grace to—as their reflection of God is very different than you own? List out some of the traits that annoy or bother you about that person. (Note: these are not sin issues, but rather character or personality traits that are irksome to you.) Spend some time asking God these traits be His unique reflections in them.

- Take a walk and talk to the Lord
or
- Write an entry in your journal
or

- Call or talk with someone about the truth that you are a unique and beautiful expression of God to the world. (Perhaps you could try explaining it to a child!)

If you don't believe this, then wrestle with it before Him. If you do, then rejoice before Him over the fact that your value and worth are not based on what you do but on who you are and Whose you are! Find some way to wrestle with and process this truth beyond your small group.

Going Deeper

If you wrestle with the fact that God delights in you, that He has created you as a beautiful and unique expression of Himself to the world, spend some time meditating on Psalm 139. Seek Him and acknowledge that only He can help your heart believe these truths. Ask Him to do so.

List out all the things God does in this Psalm. For example:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Verse 1 | He searches me
He knows me |
| Verse 2 | He knows my actions
He understands my thoughts |
| Verse 3 | He knows every detail of my day
He is intimate with each move I make, each thought or feeling I have... |

Write out some of the truths that especially speak to your heart and put them on a card or Post-It where they will catch your eye throughout the day. Allow His tender and intimate care of you to lift your eyes and heart to Him.