God's Masterpiece

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 October 2026

Preacher: James Butterfield

[0:00] Good morning. You can definitely tell the weather has turned, hasn't it? Even though it is sunny outside today, it has definitely turned a lot colder this past week.

! I have to admit, I even turned the heating on this morning for half an hour, don't tell Naomi. But yeah, it was mainly for Matilda and Matilda was cold, so it wasn't for me.
But it's hard to believe that only a few weeks ago we were enjoying months of hot dry weather. At the end of August, after a couple of days rain, I remember looking at the garden and noticing that the grass already needed cutting for weeks.
It looked dead and brown and dry and lifeless. And then the rain came and it sprang back into life.
And we saw something very similar on our recent trip to the United States.
We took a helicopter ride to the Grand Canyon. And essentially you're flying over desert to get out there. Well, the pilot was telling us that just a couple of weeks earlier, it really was a dry, brown, arid desert, nothing totally lifeless.
[1:26] And yet when we were looking, there was lots of green around. There was only scattered sprouts here and there, but all that was there was green. And he was basically saying that one heavy rainfall and even the desert and began to kind of spring back to life again.

And on that trip, we saw some spectacular views. I did consider showing some photographs this morning, but pictures, you look at the amazing views and then you take a photo on your camera and what's left on your phone just doesn't really do it justice.
It doesn't capture how breathtaking the scenery was, but you don't really need to have seen those particular views to understand what I mean. So I'm sure you can all picture places that you've been to around the world or even closer to home in this country where you've kind of seen sort of the scenery around you and just sort of amazed at, you know, the view and you stand in awe of the beauty of nature.
You know, whether we were looking across the Grand Canyon or we were stood staring up at the giant sequoias and walking through the mountains and the valleys of Yosemite or in the middle of nowhere, gazing up at a sky filled with stars.
Creation has a way of stopping and makes way making a stop and marvel. It reveals something of the majesty and the creativity and the power of God.
[3:04] But it also raises an important question. What is God's greatest masterpiece? And to answer that, we're going to take a look in the Bible and go back right to the beginning and see what the Bible tells us about the way God made us.

Before that, just a couple of verses in the psalm, Psalm 19, that tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God. Psalm 139 says that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.
The vastness of the universe is breathtaking and the design of the human body is extraordinary. Yet right back in Genesis, we're told something even more remarkable.
Human beings were created in the image of God. Throughout the creation account, God looked at what he had made and called it good. Then he created humanity in his own image and he declared that his completed creation was very good.
Men and women were made to know God, reflect his character and live in fellowship with him. But we know how the story continues.
[4:19] Adam and Eve rebelled against God and sin entered the world. What had been beautiful became marred. Hope gave way to despair. Peace to conflict.

Wholeness to brokenness. And life to death. You see, sin damaged the image we were created to reflect. It separated the whole of humanity from God.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

And it left us unable to repair ourselves. So, the question remains. What is God's greatest masterpiece? Can what has been marred ever become a masterpiece again?
Paul gives us the answer in Ephesians 2 verse 10. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus.
So we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. The word translated masterpiece here is the Greek word poema.
[5:24] And that's where we get the English word poem from. It refers to something that's made or crafted. A work produced by its creator. Paul is telling us that those who are in Christ are God's workmanship.

His work of grace made new for a purpose. Think back to some of the great artists over in history and over the years.
You had Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa. Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. We've got Vincent van Gogh with his many paintings of sunflowers.
And each work bears the mark of its maker. In the same way, believers are the work of God. And what sin has marred, God is making new through Jesus Christ.
So let's begin by thinking about the one who is doing that work and how he continues to shape us. See, a masterpiece doesn't create itself.
[6:30] Its beauty reflects the skill, the purpose and the intention of the artist. In the same way, our new life in Christ is not something we produce for ourselves.

It is the work of God's grace. God chose to rescue us. God provided the way of salvation through his son. God has done everything necessary to make us new.
In John 15, Jesus says, You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit. So when Paul says that we are created anew in Christ Jesus, he's not describing a small repair or a superficial improvement.
He's not just patching us up. God doesn't simply touch up the old canvas and leave it at that. In Christ, he gives us new life.
Paul writes again in 2 Corinthians says, This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone and new life has begun.
[7:43] We don't become God's masterpiece through effort, achievement or good behaviour. We become his worship through faith in Jesus Christ, through his death and resurrection and by the grace of God.

But although we are made new in Christ, we don't become a finished work of art overnight. The creation of a masterpiece takes time.
Leonardo da Vinci spent four years painting the Mona Lisa. There's evidence that he had drafts of the probably years before that. Michelangelo spent four years painting the ceiling of Sistine Chapel. Van Gogh painted and repainted sunflowers many times over the years to perfect his masterpiece.
In the same way, God patiently shapes us into the people he intends us to be. And that process isn't always comfortable. God may and God will use challenges, disappointments and seasons of waiting to mould our character, to deepen our faith and to make us more like Christ.
[9:02] Yet we can trust the artist's hand because he never abandons his work. Paul again, writing in Philippians says, And I am certain that God who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

See, sitting there this morning, you may feel unfinished. You might see the flaws, the rough edges, the areas that still need attention.
But a work in progress is still the work of the artist. God is not finished with you. And that naturally leads us to ask then, What is he shaping us for?
See, God does not save us by good works, but he does save us for good works. Ephesians 2 makes it clear that salvation is a gift of grace.
We cannot earn it, achieve it. We certainly don't deserve it. Yet the grace that saves us also gives our lives a new direction.
[10:13] We are created anew in Christ so that we can do the good things that God has prepared for us. And these good works are not a way of gaining God's approval. They are the fruit of already having received his love.

We don't serve in order to become his masterpiece. We serve because in Christ that is what he has made us. Paul begins the second half of Ephesians with these words in chapter 4 and verse 1.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Therefore, I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.
There are six chapters in Ephesians and it kind of splits into two halves. The first three chapters of Ephesians explain what God has done for us. The final three show how that truth should shape everyday life.
The good works God prepares us for include preserving unity within the church, growing together in spiritual maturity, renewing the way we think, treating others with love, grace and forgiveness, honouring God in our homes and workplaces, and standing firm in the strength God provides.
[11:35] But these aren't just isolated tasks for us to complete, a checklist for us to tick off. They're a pattern of a life that's shaped by grace.

God has placed each of us where we are, each with our own unique opportunities, our own unique gifts and experiences, so that his love can be expressed through us.
Now, that might sound like a big calling, and it is. So where do we find the strength to live it out?
See, God doesn't merely give us work to do and then set us on our way, says off your trot, get on with it, doesn't and just leaves us to manage alone.
The same God who gives us purpose also gives us the power to live it out. Because on our own, we can't produce the life Paul describes.
We may try harder, make resolutions or depend on our own strength. If you think about New Year's resolutions, how long do they typically last?
[12:47] When we try to do things, make our own plans for our life and do them on our strength, it often fizzles out very quickly. But depending on God, the lasting spiritual fruit comes from God at work within us.

Again, Paul writes in Philippians 2, says, Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.
For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him. Notice the balance. We are called to respond, obey and act.
But we do so because God is already at work in us. He shapes our desires and supplies the strength we need. He doesn't just show us a path.
He enables us to walk it. See, the Christian life is not saved by faith. Job done. Feet up. Sit back and wait for glory.
[13:54] We are saved by grace, created anew for a purpose. We are empowered by God to live a life that reflects Him day by day. So we are almost done.

Let's just look back at those three points and just bring them all back together. Because really it comes down to this. Ephesians 2.10 tells us that we are made by God, made new in Christ and made for a purpose.
You might sometimes feel unfinished, inadequate or uncertain about what God can do through you. But a work in progress is still the work of the artist.
God has not abandoned what He began. is shaping you, guiding you and working within you. When you stand before a scene of outstanding natural beauty or you look up at the wonder of the stars, Remember that the God who made all of that is also at work in you.
You are not an accident. In Christ you are God's workmanship, loved, valued and created anew.
[15:10] So don't try to earn the identity that grace has already given you. Receive it. Live from it. Step into the good works God places before you, trusting that he will give you both the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

You are God's masterpiece. Let's pray. Father God, we thank you that we are your workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus.
Thank you that you know us completely and you love us faithfully. And thank you that our worth does not rest on what we achieve or how others see us or how strong we feel in ourselves but on your grace and on everything Jesus has done for us through his death and resurrection.
Lord, forgive us for the times when we forget who we are in you. Forgive us when we compare ourselves with others or we focus only on our faults or when we believe that our failures are beyond your ability to redeem.
Help us to see ourselves through the eyes of grace, not as finished or perfect, but as people in whom you are patiently and lovingly at work.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[16:24] Help us to trust your hand when we feel unfinished. In seasons of joy keep us humble and thankful. In seasons of disappointment wait to know uncertainty. Remind us that you have not abandoned us.

Shape our character, renew our minds, deepen our faith and make us more like Jesus. Give us patience for the process and confidence that the good work you have begun will be brought to completion.

Open our eyes, Lord, to the good works you have prepared for us. Show us where we can serve, encourage, forgive, listen, speak with kindness and bring hope.

Help us not to overlook the ordinary opportunities you place before us in our homes and in our church and our workplaces and all around us in our communities. But teach us to live from your grace rather than striving to earn your love.

Work within us by your Holy Spirit. Give us the desire to do what pleases you and the courage to obey when the way is difficult. Where we feel weak, be our strength.

[17:32] Where we feel uncertain, guide our steps. And where we've grown weary, renew us. May every gift you have given us be used for your glory and for the good of others.

May our lives bear the mark of our Creator and let our words reflect your truth. Our actions reveal your compassion and our relationships be shaped by your love. Send us out with grateful hearts ready to walk in the purpose for which you have made us.

And when we forget, gently remind us again, we are your workmanship, loved by you, made new in Christ and never beyond the reach of your transforming grace.

We offer ourselves to you afresh today, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host