

Sometimes I wonder: Is this why God created and Jesus died? That I might mow a lawn, wait in my car at traffic lights, scrap bones from my plate before I squeeze it into the dishwasher?

Did God create and Jesus die that I might spend hours watching soccer matches, baseball games, berate myself for not hitting a little white ball straight?

Did God create and Jesus die that I might go to work day after day, do the same task over and over, make the same small talk, come here on Sundays and confess the same sins, sing the same hymns, offer the same dollars?

Did God create and Jesus die that I might fill my sixty or seventy or eighty years as a brief prelude to eternity? OR so that my existence here might be a tiny link in the chain of generations, my life connecting my ancestors with my successors? Or so that I might be tested by a lifetime of trial and trouble to see if I am worthy of a better life?

Did God create and Jesus die so that I might ride the mean streak at Cedar Point, and eat cotton candy, feed the hungry, visit the sick, cloth the naked, dress myself in the brightest colors, delight in a symphonies sound? Did God create and Jesus die so that all of this might be?

One way we can find out is by watching Jesus. Does he send people off to monasteries, to a lifetime of prayer? Does he holler at them about their sins, spend time complaining about the sad state of the nation's morals? Is he full of instructions and expectations? Is he down on fun? Whatever Jesus says and does will tell us a lot about why God created and Jesus died. So let's take a small look today.

In the fifth chapter of Mark, three healings are reported. First, the healing of a man with an unclean spirit. There was no place for him in normal life, people did not want him around. Night and day among the graves and on the mountain he was always howling and bruising himself with

stones. They tried chaining him. He broke the chains. A wandering crazy man.

Jesus cast out the demons and the man begged Jesus that he might go with him. But Jesus refused and told the man, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you."

A woman suffered from abnormal bleeding for twelve years. God's law declared her unclean, anyone who touched her would be unclean. Or whom she touched.

We read, "She had endured much under many physicians and had spent all that she had and she was no better, but rather grew worse." In a crowd she reached out and touched Jesus clothing, and was healed. When she confessed to Jesus that she had touched him, he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease."

The daughter of the leader of the synagogue died. She was twelve. When children die the sadness is deepest of all. But Jesus took the dead child by the hand, told her to rise and she was alive once more. She got up and began to walk around and Jesus told them to give her something to eat.

Three people whose affliction cut them off from life were put back into the middle of life. No more chains for the man once possessed, no more uncleanness and shame for the woman, no more tears for the family of the girl ^{raised} ~~made a live~~ to do the things twelve year old girls do.

No instruction on how to live did Jesus give them, no changing of their habits or separation from their family and friends. Jesus simply restored them to the world of washing clothes and going to work and marrying and childraising.

God has created and Jesus has died simply so that we might live and delight in the life God has given. And thank him for it.

Jesus said, "I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly." Not for long faces and endless sorrow over our sin, but for delight and joy and peace God has created us. Not so that we can be tried and tested to finally escape from this vale of tears, but that we can treasure life here and now and praise God for it.

And when we are the man beset by demons, the woman robbed of normal life by disease, the parents of the child robbed of the precious gift of life, we know that Jesus is on our side. He will work with us, helping us to find peace in the midst of strife, joy even as we are overwhelmed by sorrow, health even as pain afflicts us.

How God must smile when he hears the shouts of children at play, listens to the dinner conversation of a family just happy to be together, hears us sing our thanks to him for all his goodness.

God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

That's why God created. And Jesus died so that one day each of us can say thank you, Lord, face to face.