

## My Lot in Life

When I was living in St. Louis, studying at Concordia Seminary, I worked in a small machine shop. This shop made machine parts like screws, bolts, and turnbuckles out of metal, like steel, aluminum and bronze. It was a small team of workers, no more than a dozen people in the entire company. My job was mostly moving the metal around for the skilled craftsmen working there. Most of them were getting up there in age, and they liked to hire the young men at the seminary to move around the heavy stuff. But, it was incredible to see just how well-crafted they made these parts. Many of them had to be accurate to the nearest ten thousandth of an inch. If I learned anything from that job it's that, well, I always wanted to work with aluminum. It's the lightest! I didn't have to work as hard. But, more importantly, I saw how a skilled worker can craft the world around him. That someone could shape such detailed and unique parts out of cold, hard steel.

And this is how each of you shape and mold your lives in the world around you. You've crafted for yourselves a unique lot in life: a truly unique situation and context. Our lots are made up of many different things. Our relationships with our friends and family. Our workplaces. Our earthly treasures. Our lot is the entirety of our lives, and everything that happens to us. Sometimes, crafting this lot can be really fun! The joy found in a hard day's work. I remember days at the machine shop where sometimes, work was good. Like, it was sometimes a good challenge to see how many steel bars I could move in a day. There's a good, simple joy seeing what we can do in a day.

We might also do things to improve our lot and try to make it better. We craft our lives in a way that's pleasing to us, taking charge of our lives. In our Western, American world, there's many opportunities to improve ourselves, like education. It gives us an upward mobility, and helps us get access to some nice things in this world. We live in a country right now where the vast majority of people have reasonable access to education, food, clean drinking water and shelter. It's incredible! But, can all the stuff we love in this world really help us? Can our own lot that we've crafted ultimately save us? All the wealth we have won't save us from the suffering in this life.

More times that we'd like to admit, our lots often seem like failures rather than masterpieces. Sin finds a way in, and creates chaos in all of our lives. What if my lot is toiling through crippling debt in this difficult economy? Living from paycheck to paycheck, and there's very little to show for the toil. What if my lot is rife with broken relationships? Along the way, friends and relationships what were once warm and full of life have grown stagnant, and cold. What if my lot is shrouded with death and loss? The graves of the faithful that have gone before us, some far too soon. Is this really what our lives are supposed to look like?

To help answer these questions, let's look at the Old Testament king, Solomon. . Although we can't be certain, most people believe that he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, where our text comes from today. Now, Solomon was the richest king in the history of Israel. He wanted for nothing. He had wealth, fame, reputation, and a peaceful reign. Second to Jesus, he is credited as the wisest man who ever lived. He wrote large sections of the book of Proverbs, which is full of good and wise sayings, words to live by. He enjoyed a life of peace and prosperity. The entire nation he was in charge of benefitted from his reign. By our standards, he crafted the perfect lot in life.

He was in perfect control of his world. But, this man who had everything came to this realization: you can't take it with you. Verse 15 says, "as one came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand." This is grim news. All we craft for ourselves in this world, all that we love for will end up being for nothing. No matter how good our lives can be, it will not count for anything. With us in charge, this is our lot in life. Everything is "vanity," as Solomon says. Everything is meaningless, empty, and cannot last. Even our names in a 100 years' time will be as empty and meaningless as a breath of wind. If our trust is in what we ourselves can craft, we will fail.

But thankfully, our lot with God contrasts this bleak reality. He sent his son, Jesus into the world, and took on this broken, flawed lot in life. Isaiah 53 says, "surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." This means that Jesus took on every bad day, every broken relationship, all our grief and loss. Jesus took on our great shared experience we all suffer from: sin and death. But, he didn't stay dead. He rose. He took our doomed lot which leads to sin and death, and he crafted us a new one that gives joy and life. As Christians, our lot in life is this: living under Christ's rule. Jesus, who came suffered and died for us all, is now Lord of all creation, forever. And our Lord Jesus isn't a cruel lord, but is good and gracious to us. He loves each and every one of you more deeply and richly than any of us could ever imagine. And he invites us to love his world in a similar way.

In this lot, we see a new way, a better way to live in the world. Instead of loving just ourselves, God enables us to love those around us. Jesus, the master craftsman, uses us as his instruments. We are the tools he uses to shape and mold his creation as he sees fit. He uses us broken, flawed instruments to bring His goodwill into this world.

He uses us in the relationships we have, the toil that we endure, to bring him glory. As Solomon says in verse 10, We are called “to rejoice in our toil – this is the gift of God.” God works in our vocations, the callings we have to the people around us. In these vocations, the world experiences a little of what Jesus is really like. Jesus is present in a parent loving their children. He’s there in the love between a husband and wife. Doing your best at your workplace for your coworkers. Jesus breathes life, meaning, purpose into our lives! To accept my lot and rejoice in my toil. To passively receive this new life, this new standing in his kingdom, and then to go, love and serve my neighbor. It’s a gift from God. And Jesus is there with us in the work. Not like some standoff manager, but the active craftsman, shaping and molding in our lives. He’s there in the good moments, the God moments, that make all the toil worth it. When a parent sees their child doing something fulfilling, finding joy in their lives. When sparks are kindled in a relationship. When the vicar doesn’t put you to sleep with his sermon. Yes, we might stumble and fail in our vocations. We’re still sinners. But God is gracious and merciful to us, and he offers us all help in our time of need.

God wants to have a deep, personal relationship with you. Jesus invites us to call and pray in every time of need, and to give praise for every good thing. Whenever we struggle or mess up in our vocations, pray to God and ask for his help. Give thanks to him for all the good he does in your lives. He takes our self-centered, meaningless, vain lot in life, and he replaces it with a lot full of love and meaning in his kingdom. Jesus crafted a perfect place in his kingdom for you, to be a part of his own family (Sat only: just like he did for Sawyer earlier this evening) (Sun, 11am just like he did for Gemma and Lennox earlier this morning). The meaningless vanity of our old life is gone. God bless this new, loving lot crafted by Jesus. Amen.