



# **CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS**

**7401 UNIVERSITY AVE., CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613**

**(319) 277-0924**

**[INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG](mailto:INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG)**

**[WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG](http://WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG)**

## Life is God's Gift

January 31, 2021

Rev. Lee Laaveg

TEXT: Psalm 139:13-18 (NASB1995)

For You formed my inward parts;  
You wove me in my mother's womb.  
I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
Wonderful are Your works,  
And my soul knows it very well.  
My frame was not hidden from You,  
When I was made in secret,  
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;  
Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;  
And in Your book were all written  
The days that were ordained for me,  
When as yet there was not one of them.  
How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.  
When I awake, I am still with You.

---

Hello friends,

Grace and peace are always for you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Savior, our God. Amen.

Life is God's beautiful gift to you. In this global pandemic/coronavirus year, my wife Denise and I have watched more television in the last nine months than probably the

last five years put together. One of the programs that we've watched with enjoyment is a program called "Call the Midwife." The plotline of the story is set in a poor section of London, England, in the early 1960s, where a group of sisters, together with some professional nurses, functioned as midwives in this impoverished section of London. So there's all kinds of storylines going on about life challenges, family dynamics, marital struggles, prejudice, immigration, unemployment, teenage pregnancy... All these dynamics are going on. But in the middle of all these storylines is this constant of babies being born – of life continuing to come.

Someone has said that a child's birth is a sign that God has not given up on humanity. And these stories show us in a vivid way the wonder of life as a baby is born. Wouldn't you agree that life is precious? Whether you're standing in a hospital room where a mother is giving birth, or you watch the child's first steps, the first bike ride, the first day at school, or go to a whole other end of the education spectrum when they graduate from high school or college. Maybe it's when a father walks down the aisle with his daughter and the pastor at the wedding says, "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?" And we think: "Life is precious." Every day, every chapter of life is precious. It's true even when life is dark or difficult or we face great adversity – even if we stand by an empty grave and lay to rest someone who has been loved and influential in our lives. Life is God's precious gift.

So many of us have seen the classic movie, "It's a Wonderful Life," a story where Jimmy Stewart plays the character George Bailey, who's frustrated with life, thinking that he's not fulfilling his dreams. And then an angel, Charlie, has to show George Bailey what life would be like if he had never existed. And then he comes to realize how many lives he's touched by his love, his kindness, his compassion, his abilities – that he's blessed people in life.

I would say that to every one of you. The God who gave you life uses your life to bless and influence other people; that life in the big picture of God's perspective would not be the same if you'd never existed. The God who designed you for His purposes is using your life in a vital way for His purposes in this world. You need to embrace the truth that life is God's gift, and you, by virtue of who God made you to be, are a gift to this world.

So we might ask the question in the wrestling or celebrating with the truth, God gives us the gift of life, we might wonder, “Well, who am I and what is my intended purpose? And is God even relevant to my daily life journey?” The moment you say that God is the source of life. Or think about the truth, that God in Heaven literally rejoiced the day you were born. Then all those questions about who we are and what our purpose is resonate with the truth: that there is a God, He's the source of love and life, and that He has created you for His purposes and for His glory. So those verses that we shared from Psalm 139 tell us so poignantly that each one of us is fearfully and wonderfully made. We're woven together by God, the master artist – you're God's masterpiece. It says that you were skillfully wrought in your mother's womb. In Genesis 1-2, it tells us how God created all life, the world, the cosmos. But that by His power, in His word, people are created in His image, you are no accident.

In Isaiah 43, we read how God says that we're precious to Him, that He wants to honor us. To me, that means that God wants to brag about the truth, that you are His created child and that He loves you to death, and that He wants to elevate you and shine the light on you to tell you: you are very important to Him. Each one of you is beautiful by God's design, gifted by God for God's plans in this world. You're vital! But one more thing about that: not only is God the source of life, but He's the Father of all creation and He's your dear Father. Jesus said we can call God our Abba: our daddy.

There's a powerful verse in Proverbs 11:28. In the Message Bible that reads this way: “A life that is devoted to things is a dead life, like a stump. But a God-shaped life is like a flourishing tree.” The atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell once said, “Unless you assume the presence of God, then the question of life's purpose is meaningless.” I would interpret that to mean that Russell believed because he didn't believe God exists, that Russell believed that life really was vain or meaningless. But the opposite is true from a faith perspective: to say that we've been created by God for God, then we discover our purpose when, in faith, we walk in this world in harmony with God. Only then can we embrace our full glory and our true purpose for which God created us.

It's important for us to hold on to these precious truths about how God says we're beautiful and gifted and that He is the giver of our life, because many of us have experienced difficulty in life where our inner hearts are wounded. Sometimes life is hard, sometimes life is unfair. And sometimes the philosophies of this world attribute values to different people as if some people don't matter. Some people say unless you

have power, you're nobody. Some people attribute value by wealth or looks or accomplishments or athleticism or fame in the world's eyes. Don't let the world's philosophies of value attribute value, or lack of, to you. You have been created by God Himself, designed beautifully for His purposes.

Other people have a wounded sense of self because they're haunted by regrets of what they wish they'd done differently at key moments in their life journey. They're walking around with a cloud of guilt or they are defining their value by a sense of shame in their regrets or mistakes. Guilt says, "I made a mistake." Shame says, "I am a mistake." When shame gets a hold of us, it can drive us down into a deep funk of depression from which it's hard to arise again.

Still others of us have a wounded inner self because we've been abused or bullied through many aspects of life. We've been mistreated by many people who have labeled us "losers," or told that we're no good, or we've lived in an atmosphere of hyper-critical spirit, so that we have a low self-worth. And then you throw into the equation that there is a prince of darkness, Satan, that lies to us in order to hold us down. He wants to use our pain or regrets to control us so that we end up envisioning that Satan is right when he says that we're less than what God intended and we deduce that we are a failure and we just give up.

Well, I've got great news for you: the God who created the beautiful and gifted also has sent Jesus Christ to the world, not only to forgive your regrets and mistakes and sins and take away your guilt and reconcile you into His love, but God has sent Jesus to us to redeem us by His precious blood; to enable us to be resilient as Christ Jesus would heal our inner hearts with His grace and His spirit.

Another important reason that we need to believe God's definition of our value, for He is the giver of life, is because we can live with enthusiasm. The word "enthusiastic" is derived from two little Greek words: "en theos" – in God. So when we walk with God in harmony, conscious of His presence and His love, it empowers us to expect the good and live each day with enthusiasm for what the day may bring. It's also true, like it says in Romans 8, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" So that because of God's definition of our precious value and He being the source of life, we live every day in the confidence that God works for us. Why would we approach every day as if we've already lost?

Another thing that God's definition of our value gives to us is a courage to live life, to meet its challenges, to face its dangers, to overcome our fears. It says in 1 John 4:4, "Greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world." So I have an infused coverage because the spirit of the living God dwells within me and I can face what the life brings. Courage, then, also allows me to have the power to persevere in life's difficult moments. It says in Philippians 3 that we "Press on to lay hold of the purpose for which we were laid hold of by Jesus Christ." So we have the power to push through the difficult moments or to problem solve our difficult challenges. And then we can, because we belong to Christ, embrace the purpose of our creation, or the purpose for which Jesus Christ has redeemed us. You remember how Jesus said, in response to the question, "What is the greatest commandment?", and Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." And then He said, "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Only one we love ourselves are we freed up, filled with the Holy Spirit, to love other people.

So because God says to us that we're beautiful, gifted and vital, that we are precious in His sight and honored by Him, and because Jesus has forgiven us and redeemed us and healed us, then we can truly approach this as a personal life goal. We're going to love God, the source of our life. We're going to love ourselves as God has created us, and we're going to then love other people in His name.

I want you to know that God has created you for His glory, He's created you to be used by His purposes. For that reason, you are precious to Him. He's also sent Jesus because you're infinitely valued – that He might redeem you and that He might heal your heart, that He might reconcile you to live by a faith consciousness in His love. You can heal, you can be resilient. You can have courage for every day. But realize not only that all of life is a gift, but each day is a gift, so that this day you and I, in faith, can say to the Lord, "Thank you, God, for this day. Thank you, God for your love. Thank you, God for forgiveness. Thank you, Jesus, that with your spirit, you heal me of all my wounds. You restore me and you allow me to live for your glory, now and forever."

Amen.