



## THE JOY OF BECOMING WHO GOD MADE US TO BE

Many years ago, I went on my one and only hunting trip, accompanying my husband on a pheasant hunt in South Dakota. I did not carry a gun, but went along to enjoy a long walk on a gorgeous fall day, and experience a hunt firsthand. It turned out that my favorite part was watching the hunting dogs at work.

The Labrador Retriever did his job gamely enough, but the German Shorthaired Pointer was on fire. This dog was observably on a mission, a quivering mass of lean muscle and single-hearted purpose as he busted through brush and brambles in relentless pursuit of the prize. He was clearly made for that purpose and loved every minute of it, scrapes and thorns notwithstanding.

People are made for a purpose, too. Think of Eric Liddell, the 1924 Olympic gold medal winner in the 400-metre race, and inspiration for the highly acclaimed movie, *Chariots of Fire*. When questioned about his passion for running, Liddell said, "God made me for a purpose, but He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel his pleasure."

Liddell ran to glorify God, and later pursued his God-given purpose by serving for 20 years as a missionary in China, where he died in a Japanese civilian internment camp in 1945.

The Bible, too shows us many people who were clearly made to serve God in a particular way. Though a slave in a foreign land facing much adversity, Joseph used his God-given ability to interpret dreams and manage resources to rise to power in Egypt, where God had sovereignly positioned him to steward food for thousands during a prolonged famine, including his own tribe of Jacob (Genesis 37-50).

Bezalel and Oholiab exercised their artistic vision and exceptional craftsmanship in constructing the tabernacle used for worship as the Israelites roamed the desert. Bezalel crafted the Ark of the Covenant that housed the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. Both used their gifts to teach others fine craftsmanship for God's purposes, too (Exodus 31:1-11; 36:1).

Long before David used his leadership gifts as the great king of Israel (2 Samuel), he used his musical gifts to soothe King Saul and to compose 73 beautiful psalms we still pray and sing today (1 Samuel 16:14-23; Psalms).

Lydia was a gifted businesswoman, who used her success as a merchant of fine purple cloth to host and support the apostle Paul when he brought the gospel to Philippi (Acts 16:11-15). Peter was a talented fisherman, and at Jesus' calling became a gifted fisher of people as his apostle and evangelist (Matthew 4:18-20; Acts 2:14-41).

All of these people, and so many more in Holy Scripture, were clearly made for their unique missions. And none more so than Jesus Christ himself. Having always existed, He was not "made" like other humans are, but was rather incarnated by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary; yet he was likewise imbued with a purpose, for the glory of God and for the love of humanity.

His purpose was to reveal God, to proclaim the kingdom of heaven, to heal and restore people, to call all to repentance, and ultimately to die on the cross to give eternal life to all who turn to Him (e.g., John 14:9; Matthew 4:17; John 17:1-4). He was more passionate than Eric Liddell running a race, and more focused than a bird dog on a hunt.

Each of us is made for a purpose, too (Psalm 139:5, 13-16). Like Jesus, our purpose is to serve God and glorify Him by loving others, using the unique gifts He gave us in whatever setting we find ourselves.

There will be some "scrapes and thorns" along the way. Yet is a joy and our sacred responsibility to discover our gifts, both natural and spiritual, to cultivate them to their fullest, and to unleash them in his service.

When we do, amazing things happen, whether we see them or not. Either way, we fulfill our purpose by glorifying God. And either way, we can feel his pleasure.

With love in the Lord,  
The Rev. Christine Maddux