

Series: Waterstone Serves
The King is Calling
Ephesians 2:1-10
Sermon by Jeannie Wilking
Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado
Sunday morning, September 8, 2024
www.WaterstoneChurch.org

Paul: It is Maddie Ori, and she is actually the wife of Brendan Ori, who is our student pastor. That's him. Yep. Good student pastor energy right there. We are so glad that they are here. She is also an early childhood teacher and doing that right now, so we are just so glad that she is a part of our church, but she is going to be reading today from Ephesians, so thank you.

Maddie: A reading from Ephesians 2:1-10: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh, and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath, but because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved, and God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast, for we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do," the word of the Lord.

Larry: The mission of Waterstone is to become like Jesus and live for others. Thank you. One of the ways that it is costly, but we do it, is we live for others by demonstrating God's love, justice, and mercy to our neighbors, far and near, so on Pentecost Sunday, when the church was birthed, all the nations of the world were invited, and so in May, we looked to our neighbors far away. We talked about our global partners and our responsibility to take the good news of Jesus to the far reaches of the world. In September every year, we talk about our neighbors nearby, those across the street from us, and especially those that live down in the city, because God loves cities, and so today, it is my great honor and privilege to introduce our preacher, who loves the city, and we are going to talk about our neighbors nearby. At the very end of the service, just to get your hearts and minds thinking, we are going to have an opportunity for all of us to get involved in loving nearby neighbors.

Our speaker, our preacher today studied for the ministry at Denver Seminary, and then she became an associate pastor, a pastor of singles at Corona Presbyterian Church downtown, and then Cherry Hills Community Church over in Highlands Ranch, and then as a single pastor, she met a guy named Bill. So, she changed vocations, and then she and Bill and their three kids grew up here as a family at Waterstone and spent two decades here as a pillar family of Waterstone. One of their lasting legacies is that they helped start the service, which is now our Saturday night service, which has been going on for over twenty years. Jeannie's husband, Bill, was called home to heaven far too soon, and he died of cancer about nine years ago, and then as a widow, Jeannie felt the call to go and be a pastor at an inner-city church called Open Door Fellowship down on Marion Street just off Colfax Avenue, a church of the homeless, that ministers to the homeless. Jeannie is the associate pastor there. She is going to talk to us about her calling and our calling as we love our near neighbors today. Would you give a Waterstone welcome to Jeannie Wilking?

Jeannie: That is a great quote, isn't it? "I believe God made me on purpose. I also believe He made me fast, and I feel his pleasure when I run." Today, I am thrilled to be here at Waterstone. It's been a while. Larry, it's been ten years since Bill died, but it's so great to look around and see familiar faces. I really am delighted to be here, but can you see me shaking too? It is just a little different crowd than last night, but I really am grateful to be back at Waterstone. This is a special place for me. It definitely is. We wanted to come to Waterstone back in 2003, and we had heard that Larry was the praying pastor, so we wanted to be a part of his congregation, and that was when The Well started, and then I knew that Paul was the real deal when my kids were in the youth group, and Paul was the youth pastor at that time, and he gave my son a book by Brendan Manning, "The Life of the Beloved." I knew that Paul was the real deal when he was handing books like that to his youth group. I am thrilled to be here, and Billy and Sarah, they blessed our family richly through those years of worship, and Billy learned the song that Bill wanted to be sung at his funeral, and he did a fabulous job. So Waterstone is a special place for me. I am grateful to be here.

There are a few times I have been on this stage before, and I want to tell you about the very first time I was on this stage. We were having prayer night, and there was no carpet laid. It had not yet been inaugurated, and we could write verses on the floor anywhere. People were encouraged to write prayers and verses. Were any of you here that night? How fun to see those names. I came up to this part right here, and I wrote down in a Sharpie about 20 to 25 names of people that I loved, that I wanted them to hear the gospel, so I wrote those names all over this stage. Then there was another time I was on this stage. It would be interesting to know who was here when I did this. I was not invited on the stage this time, but Nick Lillo, who was the founding pastor, amazing Godly man, a little bit more conservative and staunch and formal I would say, but he would preach often about the kingdom of God and doing something with your faith, faith in action, justice in action, and that faith without works is dead. Our faith needs to be doing something, so he preached this amazing sermon about your faith being active and doing something. It was an amazing sermon, and we always sat over there, and my heart was burning inside me. I knew I had to do something, because it was making me mad that all these people were hearing the same message.

So, the back story to my anger at that point was for two months I had tried to get people to help a woman in need that went to Waterstone. At the bottom of the bulletin we put, "There is a woman in the congregation in need. If you would be willing to help, please call," and there were no responses. I made arrangements with all the adult Sunday school classes to go and present this need. I had met this woman on the women's retreat. I was the prayer coordinator there, and she came for prayer, and then she invited me to her home to start a discipleship thing, and when I got there, I could see that this need was bigger than I was. I could not do it all. She had had a neck injury. She was just getting over breast cancer. She was a single gal. She needed help with the yard. She needed help in the kitchen. She needed meals. She needed rides to doctors' offices. It was bigger than I was, so then I made arrangements to go to each adult Sunday school class. I probably covered maybe six-hundred people at that time, and nobody volunteered. Is that awful? So, you can understand, I am sitting in this sermon hearing this, knowing that nobody is willing to get uncomfortable, and so I was over here, and I came down. I was sitting over here, and at the end of his sermon, I came up on stage, and I said, "Can I please say something?" and Nick is looking at me like, "I am not sure what to do here," but he was very gracious, very gracious, and so I go to get his microphone, and it was one like this one, and I take his mike, and he is all going like this, and I am shaking. I am shaking, and I present the situation that there is a lady in our congregation that just needs some help, and then I hand the wires back to Nick, and I go sit down, and I am just shaking, and then Nick said, "So, can they come and talk to you if they are interested?" and I was just going, "Yes."

I just wanted to be invisible at that point, but there were seven people that came and wanted to volunteer to help, and the gal was here last night, and she said, “Jeannie, you have to tell the rest of that story, that those seven people loved me back to health,” and she got healing. So, I have been on this stage before. Today I have been invited, and I am delighted to be here and just share it. Larry asked me to talk about calling, and my calling through the years has changed, but it has been the same. It is fun to see all the youth here, because I was in high school when God made it clear to me that He had called me to full time ministry, and the rest of my life has played out since then.

So, I went to a Christian college. Then I worked with Youth for Christ in Oklahoma City for many years, and then I knew I wanted more education. So that was when I came to Denver to go to seminary, and Larry had the sequence of things a little bit backwards. I was at Cherry Hills when I was going to seminary and doing my internship there as one of the singles pastors there, and then had a break, a break-down. I was going to school. I was in ministry, had a full-time job, and I just needed a break, so I ended up being a, I am a floral designer by trade. My father was a florist, so I went to be a designer at the flower shop in Aspen, and Bill was going to Cherry Hills and living in Aspen, and he was looking for a church, and he went to Cherry Hills to ask if anybody knew of a good church in in Aspen. They said, “I do not know of one, but Jeannie works at the flower shop in Aspen, and she does.” So, Bill came to the flower shop looking for a church, and then we got married soon after that, and that was a fun story, but so that is just a little bit of my calling and then how God has brought me around different journeys. I was thankful that after I was on staff at Corona Presbyterian Church when my first son was born, and went to part time, and then after our daughter was born, I said, “I just need to want to be home,” and so God allowed me to have a twenty-year maternity leave, and that was wonderful, but still doing ministry, and that was when we were at Waterstone and getting to serve here and have God rock my world with week-after-week hearing about the king and his kingdom. I want to pray for us, first of all that I get through this, and for you, that we just hear what God wants us to hear, so pray with me.

Almighty God, it is in Jesus that we bow before you, asking, Holy Spirit, come have your way with us. May we hear what you want us to hear. Father, may I say only what you want me to say. We invite you here. You are the Almighty, the God who was, the God who is, the God who is to come. We are here to worship you and to be inspired about the purpose you have for each one of us. It is in the authority of Jesus name that we pray, amen.

So, this quote, I wonder how you might fill in the blanks, that I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me. What would you put in there? And when I do this, I feel his pleasure. It pleases the king, it pleases our Heavenly Father when we are thriving, when we are full. The enemy came to steal, kill, and destroy, but Jesus came to give us life and life to the abundance, an abundant life that is in here, in your soul, in your spirit, that abundant life. The father is thrilled when his kids are full of Him and have life. It delights Him to call you his own. It delights Him when his kids are thriving. It is interesting as a mom, when people ask me how I am doing, the first thing I say is to talk about how my kids are doing, in the sense that right now all three of my kids have jobs, and they love Jesus. Is there anything better for a parent to be able to say, God being the same? When his kids are thriving, He is thrilled. What thrills me even more than that is when I know my kids are loving each other. When I see the brothers reaching out and being each other’s best friend, that joy goes so deep. When I know the brothers are looking after their sister, and they are 32, 30, and 28 now, but when I know my kids are loving each other, it thrills me. Does anybody else know that feeling when your kids are being nice to each other? It thrills you. Yes. Well, He has made us to honor Him, we all have the same calling, right?

The Great Commission and the greatest commandments, we all have that calling to love God with all of who we are. We all have the same calling to go and make disciples. How many people does it take to send one? Not all of us might be on the front lines, but how many people were in that person's life that enabled him to go? He needs food. Somebody has to grow the food, package the food, and sell the food. He has to have a passport. How many people need to be in government making all those arrangements for him to have a passport? He has to get on an airplane, probably. Somebody has to know math and science to design the airplane. You get the picture. It takes a lot to send one, each person doing their part, and today I hope to wake up each one of you to see there is a sacredness in everything you do when it is offered to the king. In everything there is a sacredness. Is that such a word, sacredness? There is a holiness, no matter what you are doing, when it is offered to the king. There is a time in this sanctuary when Nick is preaching about the kingdom and honoring the king, and I got this picture that I wanted to curtsy when I prayed about if it would please the king, that just my little my head would do a little tilt and just a little curtsy, that when I am praying, and my heart is to please the king. When you honor somebody like that, you bow your head, and if it would please the king. It has changed my prayer life to do that. For a man, it would be just a simple nod and a bow like this, if it would please the king.

There is another life-changing moment that changed my prayer life, and it was during worship in this sanctuary. We sang a song that said, "In your presence, Lord, there are no shadows." In your presence, there are no shadows. That changed my prayer life. Prayer is embracing his presence. When we pray, it is to embrace the presence of Almighty God. There are no shadows. He knows everything. He knows everything, no shadows. That is why his love for us is perfect, because He knows everything about us. He invites us into his presence, where there are no shadows.

Another life-changing moment, I was sitting right back there. The place is packed, and we are praying the Lord's prayer. We are saying, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven." The phrase in there when we say, "Give us this day our daily bread," I could sense God saying, "I have given you your daily bread." It just happens to be in his freezer. We say, "Give us this day our daily bread," and it is plural. The concept of being in community and loving each other is knowing that there are things we have been blessed with that somebody else needs. That is the church, the congregation of God to know, so when we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," are there people that you know who do not have bread? If you do not, I just want to say your world might be too small.

When God allowed me to go to Open Door Fellowship, so Open Door Fellowship is actually a sister church of Waterstone, because they came out of the same ministry that was at Bear Valley Church many years ago. Andy Cannon was married to Linda, whose cousin was Frank Tillapaugh. Frank was the pastor at that time, and he wrote this amazing book, "The Church Unleashed." It is the foundation of how this church was born, because Nick Lillo and others came from Bear Valley Baptist Church to start what was then Centennial, and it turned into this church. Andy Cannon and his wife Linda, they started Jesus on Colfax downtown in a coffee shop, and people were getting saved, and so they bring all these people out to the suburbs to go to church, and the suburbs said, "We really do not know how to do this, and do you need to start a church downtown? Because our parents aren't comfortable with their kids going to Sunday school with these kids that have lived on the streets." I get that, but so that is how Open Door Fellowship started, and we are just off Colfax, and Andy learned very quickly that you can get people saved, but when you don't have a place to live, it makes things really difficult.

So, he knew that housing was critical. So, through some other ministries, we were able to buy five Victorian homes right on Marion Street. Many of you have been out there and helped with those situations. We bought all five houses for \$100,000, because they were all being condemned. Now they are homes for getting women off the street and clean and sober, and in two-year programs to be there. I can say that before I started down at Open Door, I had never met a prostitute, but when you get to know people's lives and what survival looks like, why that would happen, getting to know horrible stories of the sex traffic trade. You know what is awful? In Denver, the highest demand for sex traffickers is between 5:00 and 7:00 in the morning and 5:00 and 7:00 in the afternoon. That is the highest demand for prostitutes. Yeah, I know some of these women, and what a privilege, after my husband had died, and that first year, just getting things settled, and it is like, "Okay God, now what?" My kids were out of the house. Now what?

I got a call from a friend saying, "There is a need for a women's pastor at Open Door." I had never been there, so I went and visited, and I was humbled, and I just thought, "Father, if you could trust me to work here, it would be an honor," and I have to tell you, there are days. There is one Sunday. It was winter, and we could not control the heat. It was really hot. The back of the of the sanctuary, it is just a big room full of our homeless friends, and there are lots of other people that go to church there too. The ladies from the houses and then Providence Network come, and then we have a safe house for women. We have five different apartments for second-phase housing. Other people come, but this one particular Sunday, full of homeless people, and it is winter, and they have all their gear on. They have all their gear on all the time, day after day, so you can imagine how it smelled, and the sound system did not work. The slides did not work. It was hot, it was smelly, and I'm standing at the back, and I am just going, "Okay, this is pathetic, and there is no place I would rather be, because of how raw and real people are and how they are so hungry for God." I have the incredible privilege to get to teach people about the Bible who have never had a Bible before. I get to teach people how to pray, who have never prayed before. It is an honor to have a front row seat to see God redeem lives from the pit. It is an honor, and I am grateful, and several of you help to pay my salary, so I am grateful. Thank you for that.

Yes, so I want to tell you the theme for today is, "The King is calling You," and here is a definition for calling. Calling is a strong inner impulse towards a particular course of action, especially when accompanied by conviction of divine influence. That is calling. The king is calling you to show up and do your part in his kingdom. Let's just unpack for a little bit Psalm 139: "For He created me, my innermost parts. You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that full well." We had a prayer meeting here at church. We were up in Room 211, a prayer meeting. There was a woman there that was pregnant, and we were praying for her, and so I laid my hands on her to pray. Now just a note, you must ask permission to lay your hands on a pregnant woman's belly. Many times, people will just touch your belly and just think it's public property. It is like, no. I did ask permission to lay hands on her and pray, and I am praying for her, and I am praying this verse that you knit me. God, you are there knitting this baby together, and I picture a roll of knitting that God is there, and then I got this vision of a DNA molecule, like a row of knitting, and I thought, wow. God is there knitting this person together, and as time went on, I came up with an acronym that for the DNA.

Do you know that your DNA, if you were to stretch it out, would be two meters long? It is fascinating, your DNA, and that 99.9 of what your DNA looks like is what everybody else looks like. There is that 0.1% that looks different, and I came up with this, that you, DNA, you were designed on purpose by God, and there is no one else like you. There are things God wants you to do that nobody else

can do because of how He made you, and the A, at this appointed time, you were born at this time, where you were born, to the parents you were born to, for his purposes. You look the way you look for his purposes, that you will reach people that somebody else cannot, because you look like you. So, when we were here at Waterstone, I used to teach the class, “Shape,” and shape, in that acronym, the S stands for spiritual gifts. Know your spiritual gifts. The H is to know your heart. What do you care about? What makes you angry? To know what your heart is, your passions in life. The A, know what your abilities are. Who are you? What are your natural abilities?

Because I have a couple of, several learning disabilities, one is dyslexia, and one is with reading and spelling, so I know that God would not call me to be a secretary or an accountant. It is not a good thing when you flip numbers around. I had the worst time in the Social Security office last Thursday, because I flipped the two numbers in the middle of my Social Security number. “Sorry, but that is not coming up right,” and they repeated that, and it was, “Oh, wait. I flipped those numbers,” so my abilities would not be to be a secretary or an accountant, but I do love people. So, and then P would be your personality, to understand how you are wired, and then E would be your experiences, to know who you are, to know your shape. God has called you to be who you are.

First Peter 2:9 talks about who we are as God’s people: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies, the wonders, the deeds, the virtues, the perfections of Him who called you out of darkness and into the marvelous light.” Yes. Friends, I believe the church is suffering today because God’s people do not know who they are. They are not showing up as his people, a royal priesthood connecting heaven and Earth. Each one of you is to represent Him as a royal priesthood. A priest stands in the gap, connecting heaven and Earth, as we host his presence to connect heaven and Earth.

I am going to get political for just a quick minute. A royal priesthood, royalty, the color of royalty is what? Purple, the perfect blend of red and blue. I believe the church needs to be purple. We need God’s people, God wants his people on both sides of the aisle doing what He called them to do. If it is the unborn or the undocumented, God passionately cares for both of them, and there are things to do, and I do not know if there is anybody here, but sometimes we feel that somebody on the other side of the aisle is an enemy. We just can’t even get that they think that way. Jesus has very specific instructions for what we are supposed to do with our enemies, and if you feel like if you are a Republican, you feel like Democrats are your enemy, or vice versa, what does God call us to do to our enemies? To love them, to pray for them. Ladies and gentlemen, the church must be purple. Do what you were called to do, not where you slander. The scriptures also say, “Let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth.” We are not to slander one another, anyone.

Church people can have a bad reputation, and that’s why I think the church is in trouble today. When things were tight and I had to have, I needed to work extra, and I waited tables, and it broke my heart that the rest of the wait staff talked about the church crowd. The church crowd would come, and they would be the most demanding and the least tippers. It should not be that way, to have your reputation as you are the church crowd, but you are the most, we are the most demanding and the least tippers. Shouldn’t it be the opposite, that we know we are blessed so that we can be a blessing? Amen. We are blessed so that we might be a blessing.

So, Ephesians 2:10, let’s look at this passage. Just the last part of that there, that you are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for you to do. That word “handiwork,” is in the Greek, it would be known as a poem, “poema,” the point being that you are

God's poem, his workmanship, created to do what? What does it say? What are you created to do? We are created to do good works. Every day there are good works for you to do, if it is being kind to somebody at school, not talking bad about somebody else. If it's too, okay, confession here. There is a good reason I do not have a Christian bumper sticker on my car, but I am learning. I am trying to be more like Jesus behind the wheel, and there are times when it is like, "Okay Jesus, I know you would not have just done that," but we are to represent Him, doing good works in every opportunity you get. Who is your closest neighbor? The people you live with, right? If you love them, unload the dishwasher, good works. The people that are at school with you, what are the good works you can do every day? We are created for good works, and when we do not know who we are, that we were created to do good works, there is an identity crisis going on when you do not know who you are.

Do you know that in 2023 there were over a million and a half identity theft cases? Identity theft is a big deal. If you counted all those things up, there were over 10 and 1/2 billion dollars lost that year alone because of identity theft and fraud. What is happening to the church because we have an identity crisis going on when we don't know who we are? God created us to do good works for Him. In Galatians 5:13 and 14 it calls us to love, that we are called to be free, free to love. We are called. Because He fills us up, we have something to give, so look at this passage with me: "You brothers and sisters were called to be free, but do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh. Rather serve one another humbly in love, for the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" We are called to be free and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

There is an amazing book that is called, "The Gospel Comes with a House Key." The gospel comes with a house key. How many of you have a home? Do you have a place to lay your head? How many of you have a kitchen table? You have a platform at your kitchen table to love. You have a platform to invite people in, not to entertain them, but to be sincere about hospitality. Most of the time, people don't want to invite people into their home, because it is dirty and messy, and they do not want to invite people into their mess. That is entertaining, to want everything to be perfect. Hospitality is inviting people into your mess, so they can be free with their mess, right? Do we all have messes? Do we all have enough pride that keeps us from inviting people into our mess? Somebody can say, "ouch," right, to invite people into our mess.

Well, the clock now says, "minus 6." I think that means I have gone over time by six minutes. I am going to wrap it up. I am not sure, but I think that might be what it means, so I am going to land this plane here and just say that it is important for us to pay attention to what God is calling each one of us to do. I saw this interview with Jonathan Roumie. He is the one who plays Jesus in, "The Chosen." He was interviewed, and during this interview time the gal asked him, "So if you could sit down and have a cup of coffee with Jesus, what would you ask Him?" and right away, Jonathan said, "I would ask Him this, 'How did I do? Did I get it right?'" and I thought each one of us need to be asking Jesus that all the time. "How did I do? How did I do today?"

So, there is this Bible app that I do every morning and night for morning prayers and evening prayers, and it's Lectio 365, and I would say that my life has been changed more by the evening prayers than the morning, because the evening prayers take a short rendition of Saint Ignatius, the Examine, and the Examine is just a simple way to think through your day. Where did you see God at work, and then out of gratitude, you think, "Where did I get it right? Where did I get it wrong today? What did I do today, Father God, that grieved you?" You have a time of confession, and then you have a time of embracing the Father's love, and that we have forgiveness, and then the next part is tomorrow. You think through tomorrow, what I have to do. "What can I do tomorrow that is better than I did today?" and so you have

all these days, one day at a time. “How did I do to please you today? Where did I get it wrong, and how can I do better tomorrow?” If we do that day after day after day, those days end up being weeks, and then months, and then years, and at the end of your life, hopefully you have grown and gotten more right than wrong at that time.

Most of us do not know when our last day is going to be, but my husband did, and he had, we had two years of going through chemotherapy and all of that, and in those last days, when he knew his time was coming, Larry walked with him, with our whole family, faithfully praying us through, and Larry and Bill got to plan his service, and when Larry asked Bill, “Bill, what do you want it to look like? What do you want me to say?” Bill just said, “Just preach Jesus,” and so Larry did that, a fabulous sermon, a forty-five-minute-long sermon, but he took it seriously when Bill said, “Just preach Jesus.” So, in preparing for this sermon, I realized that the last time I was on this stage was for Bill’s service ten years ago, and I realized when I am thinking about all the different aspects of this, that those twenty-five names that I had written right here were at Bill’s service, and they heard the gospel. It was a powerful moment for us to realize that our lives are meant to please the king, if it would please the king, and you have a calling. There are good works for you to do. Ask God to open your eyes, so that you can see it. Amen? Amen.

48:25 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

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