

Sermon Series: Celebrating Life – Replacing the Joy Stealers – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield – 6/7/2009
Theme: “Celebrating Progress: Catching Perfectionism”
Title: 2 Corinthians 3:4-6
Intro.: *Illus.: The Perfect Story and Excellence vs. Perfectionism*
Theme: When we release the fear and control of our life to Jesus, he fills us with a perfect calm to live out our lives in an imperfect world with a limitless grace toward ourselves and others.

Who’s in Control? — How you answer determines whether you are infected with perfectionism!

- Symptoms of perfectionism
 1. **Fear** – losing sleep over the out-of-control (which is the norm not the exception in a fallen world)
 - a. *It is useless to work hard for the food you eat by getting up early and going to bed late. The LORD gives food to those he loves while they sleep. Psalm 127:2*
 2. **Legalism** — a skewed view of your relationship with God
 - a. *Not that we are competent (qualified) in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. vs. 5*
 - b. *"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. Romans 11:34-36*
 3. **Selfishness** – manipulating other relationships to get your way
 - a. *Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. . . It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Galatians 1:10; 5:1*
- The danger and damage of perfectionism
 1. **It steals your joy** – you find no peace with the past, no contentment with the present, and you fear the future
 - a. *The thief alone comes to kill, steal, and destroy, I have come that you might have life to the full. John 10:10*
 - b. **Illus.: John Quincy Adams view of life**
 2. **It destroys your relationship with others**
 - a. *Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. Romans 14:13*
 3. **It kills your relationship to God** (*For the letter of the Law kills, but the Spirit gives life. Vs. 6*)
 - a. *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. Romans 3:20*
 - b. *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are." Matthew 23:15*

Celebrating life in an imperfect world

- Leave room for God to redeem deficiencies
 1. Allow God to accomplish more with you than you can image, think, or do
 - a. *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21*
 - b. Paul found peace in letting God accomplish what He needed to get done through him (**2 Corinthians 3:4-5**)
 - c. Don't be so impatient with the life-time plan God has at work accomplishing with you
 2. Show grace to others in their deficiencies because God is at work in them, also, and will get it done
 - a. *Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. Romans 14:4*
 - b. Sometimes God is able to draw a beautiful picture outside the lines which we have drawn for him
 - c. **Illus.: God makes our deficiencies capable**
- Let Jesus be your sufficiency
 1. Surrendering the control and manipulation to make yourself and others right and perfect when only Jesus can
 - a. *Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6*
 - b. *He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant . . .because the Spirit gives life. vs 6*
 2. Love the lives which He has redeemed back from the edge
 - a. *"Love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:39*

The Perfect Story

The Perfect Story: There was a perfect man who met a perfect woman. After a perfect courtship, they had a perfect wedding. Their life together was, of course, perfect. One snowy, stormy Christmas Eve this perfect couple was driving along a winding road when they noticed someone at the roadside in distress. Being the perfect couple, they stopped to help. There stood Santa Claus with a huge bundle of toys. Not wanting to disappoint any children on the eve of Christmas, the perfect couple loaded Santa and his toys into their vehicle. Soon they were driving along delivering the toys. Unfortunately, the driving conditions deteriorated and the perfect couple and Santa Claus had an accident. Only one of them survived the accident. Who was the survivor?

Answer: The perfect woman. She's the only one that really existed in the first place. Everyone knows there is no Santa Claus and there is no such thing as a perfect man. **A Male's Response:** So, if there is no perfect man and no Santa Claus, the perfect woman must have been driving. This explains why there was a car accident. **Source Unknown.**

Excellence vs. Perfectionism

Edwin Bliss said, "The pursuit of excellence is gratifying and healthy. The pursuit of perfection is frustrating, neurotic, and a terrible waste of time." Tim Hansel, Eating Problems for Breakfast, Word Publishing, 1988, p. 39.

John Quincy Adams view of life

John Quincy Adams held more important offices than anyone else in the history of the U.S. He served with distinction as president, senator, congressman, minister to major European powers, and participated in various capacities in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and events leading to the Civil War. Yet, at age 70, with much of that behind him, he wrote, "My whole life has been a succession of disappointments. I can scarcely recollect a single instance of success in anything that I ever undertook." Charles Sell, Unfinished Business, Multnomah, 1989, p. 233.

God Makes our Deficiencies Capable

Elisa Morgan, president of MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) International, writes: I'm probably the least likely person to head a mothering organization. I grew up in a broken home. My parents were divorced when I was 5. My older sister, younger brother, and I were raised by my alcoholic mother. While my mother meant well—truly she did—most of my memories are of my mothering her rather than her mothering me. Alcohol altered her love, turning it into something that wasn't love. I remember her weaving down the hall of our ranch home in Houston, Texas, glass of scotch in hand. She would wake me at 2 a.m. just to make sure I was asleep. I would wake her at 7 a.m. to try to get her off to work. Sure, there were good times like Christmas and birthdays when she went all out and celebrated us as children. But even those days ended with the warped glow of alcohol. What she did right was lost in what she did wrong. Ten years ago, when I was asked to consider leading MOPS International, a vital ministry that nurtures mothers, I went straight to my knees—and then to the therapist's office. How could God use *me*—who had never been mothered—to nurture other mothers? The answer came as I gazed into the eyes of other moms around me and saw their needs mirroring my own. God seemed to take my deficits and make them my offering—"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). **Elisa Morgan, Christian Parenting Today (May/June 1999), p. 64**

2 Corinthians 3:4-6

⁴Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. ⁵Not that we are competent (*qualified*) in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. [NIV]