

Tom Moore Funeral Sermon – June 22, 2026 – Ephesians 2:4-10

One of the blessings of a Christian funeral is that it gives us an opportunity to remember a person's life. We remember the stories that made him who he was. We remember the things he loved. We remember the ways he served others. And as we remember Tom, there's certainly much to remember.

He was proud of his service in the Navy aboard the *USS Oriskany*. He spent thirty-five years working at Toastmaster. He gave fifteen years as a volunteer firefighter. He faithfully served his congregation, leading the property board, the board of education, working with the youth.

And then there's all that Tom did at home. He was a faithful husband to Gladys for fifty-seven years. A father to three sons, and then a grandfather and a great-grandfather. He was known for a strong work ethic, one that he worked hard to pass along to his sons. He believed that if something was worth doing, it was worth doing well. That is a life filled with good works.

And yet, today, we heard a passage that reminds us that our greatest comfort is found not in the work we have done, but in the work God has done for us. And our Epistle lesson today wasn't just chosen at random. It contains Tom's confirmation verse: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."*

St Paul begins by describing us in a way that sounds a bit shocking. He says we were dead in our trespasses. Dead people don't improve themselves. Dead people don't earn God's favor. Dead people don't raise themselves from the dead. Fortunately, they don't have to.

*"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ."* Our salvation doesn't begin with us. It begins with God. It's not about our love for Him, but His love for us. It's not because of our decision, but because of His mercy. It's not the result of our accomplishments. It's the result of His grace.

That truth is especially comforting, I think, when we remember the later years of Tom's life. For much of his life, Tom was a man who took satisfaction in taking care of things. In maintaining his home and property. He took pride in doing his work well. And there's something deeply honorable about that. God gives that kind of work as a blessing.

But age and Parkinson's disease took that away. And it was deeply frustrating for him. He wanted so badly to care for his home and wife, but his body just wouldn't cooperate. He wanted so badly to do the things he had always done, mow the yard and have coffee with his buddies at McDonalds, but life just couldn't be the same anymore.

And I see this with older members all the time. They're tempted to wonder whether they still have value when they can no longer do what they once did. And God's answer is clear. Your value was never measured by your productivity. Your worth was never determined by how much work you could accomplish.

God loved Tom long before Tom accomplished anything. God loved him from the moment he first heard God's Word. To his baptism. To his confirmation. To his marriage to Gladys. God loved him throughout every year of faithful service.

And when infirmity made it impossible for him to do many of the things he loved, God's love had not diminished by even the smallest measure. Because God's love doesn't depend upon what our hands can do. It depends upon what Christ's hands have already done.

You know, I said before that Tom spent thirty-five years at Toastmaster. He retired in quality control. His job was to inspect products for flaws. To make sure they worked as they were supposed to. To identify imperfections before they reached the customer. He knew that everything made by human hands has imperfections somewhere. Every product can eventually wear out. Every machine eventually breaks.

The same is true of us. When we honestly examine our own lives, we find imperfections everywhere. We see sins we wish we could undo. We remember words we wish we had never spoken. We think of opportunities we missed and failures we can't erase. If our hope rested on the quality of our workmanship, we would have no hope at all.

Instead, Paul points us somewhere else. He says, *"For we are his workmanship."* The greatest work in Tom's life was never he service aboard the *Oriskany*, or the appliances he inspected, or the property he maintained, or the fires he helped extinguish, or even the family he faithfully loved.

The greatest work was what God was doing in him through Christ. God claimed him as His own in Baptism. God forgave his sins. God strengthened his faith through His Word and Sacraments. God preserved him through joys and sorrows, through health and sickness, through strength and weakness. God was shaping him into His own workmanship.

And because God had already made Tom His own, then came the good works. We are saved by grace, not because of works. Then, only afterward, Paul says we are *"created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

Tom had a life filled with good works. But they weren't done as payments to God. They were gifts God gave Tom to do for his neighbors. That's the beauty of every Christian life. God saves us entirely by grace, and then He graciously gives us work to do in serving others.

Today, however, we remember how even those good works have come to an end. The work of being a husband and a father. The work of maintaining a home and serving the congregation. Those callings have been fulfilled. Well done, good and faithful servant. Our Lord has given you rest.

But one work hasn't ended. Christ's work for Tom and for us. His death still atones for sinners. His resurrection still conquers death. His promises still stand.

One day, Christ will complete that work too. One day these frail, sinful bodies will be raised in glory. Until that day, we don't place our confidence in the quality of our own workmanship. We rest in God's workmanship. For by grace we have been saved through faith. And that is indeed the gift of God for each of us. Amen.