

Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered, and sent for the sake of the world.

A brief elaboration of “God’s work, our hands.”

God’s work. God is at work. As in the creation of the world, what God is bringing into existence is very good — the new creation. Jesus is the embodiment of what God is working on. Jesus’ life of mercy for outcasts and sinners, offered fully on a cross and raised from the dead, is the new life God promises for the whole world. The new creation God has begun in Jesus is good work for all, and God will bring this good work to completion.

Our hands. This new creation is God’s work. God is working it both in us and through us and our hands. In us God’s Holy Spirit is accomplishing what nothing else, not even God’s law, could accomplish — a liberated life. God frees us from enslaved service to sin and death, frees us to use our hands generously, lovingly, faithfully — to live in service of reconciliation, to live for the life of the world, to live in joyous hope of what God will bring to completion in the day of Jesus Christ.

As a Book of Faith church, our witness and work emerge from our dwelling in the Word. Here are some “handholds” for “God’s work, our hands” in the Scriptures and Lutheran tradition.

God’s work is the new creation in Christ. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. ~ *2 Corinthians 5:17-18*

God’s work is mercy for sinners and outcasts, good news for the poor and oppressed. ¹⁷Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” ²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ~ *Luke 4:17-21. See also Matthew 9:9-13; Romans 5:6-8*

God will complete this good work. ⁶I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. . . . ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. ~ *Philippians 1:6; 2:13*

God works in us. ¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ~ *Romans 8:1-4.*

God works through us, our hands. “So we receive our blessings not from them [other human creatures], but from God, through them. Creatures are only the hands, channels, and means through which God bestows all blessings.” ~ Martin Luther, explanation of the 1st Commandment, *Large Catechism* (Kolb/Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, p. 389; Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, p. 368)

Our hands serve God’s work. “Just as our neighbor is in need and lacks that in which we abound, so we were in need before God and lacked his mercy. Hence, as our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each one should become as it

were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians.” ~ Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian* (*Luther’s Works*, 31:367-8)

Our hands serve the world. “We do God’s work not because God needs us to do so, but because our neighbor does. We do God’s work in Christ’s name for the life of the world.” ~ Bishop Mark Hanson