

March 10, 2024 4th Sunday in Lent CCC
“Created in Christ to Do Good Works” *Ephesians 2: 1-10*
“God has made us what we are,
and in our union with Christ Jesus
he has created us for a life of good deeds,
which he has already prepared for us to do.” v. 10 (TEV)

William Stringfellow (a writer recommended by Claire Jones) wrote in 1967, “The understanding of principalities and powers is lost nowadays in the churches, though, I observe, not so much so outside the churches.”

On a visit to Harvard in the early sixties, Stringfellow found that students in the Business School “displayed an awareness, intelligence, and insight with respect to what principalities are and what are the issues between principalities and human beings.” However, on the same visit he found that students in the Divinity School mostly felt that terms such as “principalities and powers” were “archaic imagery having no reference to contemporary realities.” For his part, Stringfellow is clear that the “common denominator” of all “demonic claims against human life” is *dehumanization*. He urges that “each and every stratagem and resort of the principalities seeks the death of the specific faculties of rational and moral comprehension which specially distinguish human beings from all other creatures.”

(p. 24, “William Stringfellow and the Christian Witness Against Death,” by Robert Boak Slocum, in Essays on William Stringfellow: Prophet of Justice, Prophet of Life, WIPF & Stock, 2014, reprint from Church Publishing, 1997)

Nobody wants to feel that their choices don’t count, but if we are dead in our sins, we are following “*the course of the world*” v.2 , without even realizing that what seems natural (*the passions of our flesh, the desires of body and mind, by nature* v.3) is in fact working against what we truly want—life, goodness.

There is many a man whose life is embittered because he feels that in this life
he has never had what his talents and his gifts and his work deserve;
that may be so; but in the sight of God there is no man who deserves anything but condemnation.
If God treated us as we deserve,
there would be nothing but condemnation and punishment for the best of us.
(p. 118, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, William Barclay, 1956)

We are *made alive with Christ, raised up with him, made to sit with him in heavenly places* (v.4,-6). We are being personally trained by God to do *good works* that benefit others and bring glory to God. (v.10) We are accepted into God’s fantastic training program, although we have not earned it by our performance in the past.