

06 October 2013

“What Is God’s Purpose for YOU? - 2”

Looking at last week’s Scripture--remember? It was the call of Moses. God had a very large purpose for Moses, two in fact almost impossible tasks. Moses and God dithered back and forth, with Moses raising often quite reasonable objections and God offering resources to meet those needs. Finally Moses blurts out, "Send somebody else!" And God says, "No. I'm sending YOU!" God had a purpose for Moses and was relentless in helping, cajoling, and pushing Moses into fulfilling it.

God has a purpose for each one of us, too. God has a purpose for you in this particular moment of your life. It might be a very different purpose than the one God had for you twenty years ago. But just because you’re done with the one you had twenty years ago doesn’t mean you’re done. You’re not useless. There are things God wants you to do.

So last week’s sermon challenge was: Begin a process this week which will help you discover or re-discover God’s purpose for you *at this time* of your life.” Anybody working on that? Maybe. Maybe not, for it is a *daunting* task. One of the things I feel good about about last week’s sermon is that we began this important process at the end of the service when we turned to the partner we had chosen and gently said, “I wonder if part of God’s purpose for you might include . . .” That was a good start. One of the things I feel bad about last week’s sermon is that what I’m asking us all to work at discerning is both important and, I think, difficult, and I didn’t leave us with any other resources to work at it.

So I’m going to try to start making amends. I’ll be departing from preaching on these narrative lectionary texts for a couple weeks to see if I can help us all do this important work of discovering God’s purpose for us. Today I just want to touch on some basics, some things we all pretty much know but could be reminded of because if we mess them up, we’re not going to get anywhere.

First, it’s all about you—and it’s not about you at all. It’s all about you in the sense that you are a unique creature. No one else in the world has your genetic makeup and your temperament and your life experiences and your circles of influence. No one. God’s purpose for you at this point in your life comes from all those things flowing together to make you who you are at this moment. It’s all about you.

But it’s also not about you at all. God’s purpose for you does not come from within. God’s purpose for you comes from God. God is the Creator. God is the Lord and Master and Savior and Redeemer and Helper and Strengthener. Don’t get me wrong. You *can* look within. Looking within is a good thing to do if what you’re looking for is how God has made you, how God has put you together, what gifts God given you. But when we go looking for what God wants us to *do* with all that we are and have, then we need to look outside ourselves. We need to look to the One who created us and knows us better than we know ourselves. We need to look to the One who loves us with a love stronger than death and who loves those around us in the same way. We

need to look to the One whose mission is to redeem the world and care for each person in it. It's from this One and this One's mission in the world that our purpose comes.

Look within. Long and hard. Critically and lovingly. And look without. Look to God. Which God? There are many out there. The one I have in mind is the God of the Bible, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So here's your sermon challenge for this week on our journey of discovering God's purpose for us in this moment of your life: Choose a Gospel. You've got four: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Choose one. Read through it this week. And ask yourself, What is Jesus' mission in the world? What is he trying to accomplish? What does he do? What does he say? What does he ask other people to do? What upsets him? What makes him happy? In other words, Who is this guy who is the Son of God come to do God's mission in the world?

Now, a warning, reading a whole Gospel can be dangerous. A lot of it will be familiar. Some of it will seem kind of strange, coming as it does from a world and a worldview very different from our own. And—here's the dangerous part—some of it will be quite challenging. Don't panic! And don't worry. Abraham bargained with God. Moses argued with God. You can, too. If you'd like, you can email me your reflections, your questions, your Aha! moments, and your disagreements. I'd love to hear them.

So, this second tool for discovering or re-discovering God's purpose for you at this time of your life is to get in tune once again with God's mission in the world. Your specific purpose is a part of that mission of God.

As we continue on this journey, I'll be glancing at Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life*. There's a bunch of stuff in there that I don't find Biblical, but there's also some really good stuff, and the book *has* been helpful to a lot of people. I really like the way he has labeled the major sections of his book. You were Made for God's Good Pleasure. You Were Formed for God's Family. You Were Created to Become Like Christ. You Were Shaped for Serving God. You Were Made for a Mission. That'll preach.