

20 Oct. 13

God's Purpose for YOU - 4

I'm going to begin this last sermon in the series Discovering God's Purpose for You at this time of your life by quoting Romans 8:29: "For those whom God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family." Or, to put in less literal but plainer English, "God knew us before we even came to be. God knew us from the very beginning. And from the very beginning God predestined us to be molded into the image of his Son, Jesus so that we might become like him and be part of his family." And then verse 31: "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

This verse—and many others like it—speaks more to our destiny than it does to our purpose. But it speaks to our purpose, too. First of all, as we continue to discern God's purpose for us, we do so with supreme confidence that our destiny is sealed and secure. God knew us before we even came to be and predestined us to be molded into the image of Jesus and to be part of his family. Period. End of story. So we do this work of discovering God's purpose knowing that our future is secure. At least I hope we do.

And that makes a huge difference. It means that we do not do this work in fear or with a spirit of timidity. We do it boldly. We'll get some things right; we'll get some things wrong. No big wup. Martin Luther put it this way: "Sin boldly; but believe more boldly."

The second difference passages like this make is that they point to our purpose. The sermon challenge these last two weeks has been to choose a Gospel, read through it 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? I asked you to do this because of the many passages in the New Testament like the one with which I began his sermon. They call us to become more Christ-like. It is becoming more Christ-like that enables us to accomplish the purpose God has for us. To me, this is a major and neglected theme of the New Testament.

Here are just a couple more verses: Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect." And 2 Corinthians 3:18: "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."

Get it? Of course you do. God has a mission in the world, revealed most clearly in the life, work, and teaching of Jesus. Our purpose is to use our unique gifts, temperament, experiences, and spheres of influence to follow Jesus, becoming more like him in doing the work he did. That's God's purpose for you.

This process of becoming more Christ-like is a slow one. As best I can tell, we are never done

with it. Philippians chapter two begins with Paul saying that we are to have the same mind, the same way of thinking that Jesus does. In verse 13 he writes, ‘This will continue until we are mature, just as Christ is, and we will be completely like him.’ It’s a slow process. We’re not left on our own in this process, for it is a Spirit guided process as we listen to Scripture, each other, and as the Spirit prays for us with sighs too deep for words.

Once again this week the narrative lectionary presents us with a call story, a story of one of God’s people being given a purpose. This time it’s David. As new situations arise, God raises up new people to address them. Last week we heard the call of Samuel. Now, Samuel is being uncalled, just as Eli was before him, and David is being called. This doesn’t mean Samuel has done anything wrong or that God is displeased with him. It means that new times call for new gifts. It also doesn’t mean that God is done with Samuel. God has a purpose for Samuel; it’s just a bit different from what his purpose was before David was called. Under the Spirit’s guidance and prayer we are discovering God’s purpose for *us* at this time in our lives.

Throughout this sermon series I have been lifting up resources provided us as we work at discerning God’s purpose for us at this point in our lives. The resources I have been lifting up are each other, Scripture, especially the prophets and the life of Jesus and prayer. As I close out this series I want to return to the resource we have in each other. If there are some of you who want to join together in a short term prayer, Bible study, and reflection group designed to help each of us discover or re-discover God’s purpose for us at this time, I will find the time and the resources to make it happen. In a few minutes at announcement time one of our council members will announce a mutual ministry review that council will use as tool for re-discovering God’s purpose for Living Water Lutheran Church and for planning and goal setting. I have absolutely no idea where this will lead. But I’m kind of excited about it.

I’d like to end by praying again the Prayer of the Day: God of strength, In David you chose a king whose heart was bigger than his stature. Create clean and willing hearts in us, and choose us to do your work. Amen.