



- Carousel at the mall – Cross purposes
 - The girls and I were unsure what we wanted to do. We thought we might like to spin a little.
 - Enter “Sinister Sammy” and his scheming sister with a clear purpose... diabolical, but certain.
 - Their taunts – “Look out, he’s gonna blow!”
 - Sinister Sammy was one sentence away from a sensational spanking!
 - Man to Stephanie – “Boy, he sure is brave!”
 - My response – “No, not brave...just suckered by Sinister Sammy’s spinning scheme.
 - Point: If we do not clearly understand and define our purpose in life, something sinister surely will.
 - If God is not in control, someone or something else will be. And if anything other than God establishes the work of our hands, we are in for a rough ride.

-- Video – What’s Your Purpose?

That video breaks my heart because the question it asks and the responses that it elicits are all too indicative of the mentality of people in our world today. As it is even in our own community, far too many people have absolutely no clue why we are here. Tragically, they meander aimlessly through life, hopelessly drowning in whatever happens to come along. And, as if that truth is not sad enough, they add to its misery by appearing completely apathetic about their purposelessness. Can you believe that?! Who could be unconcerned about such a thing? Think about it: What person at work would boast about his complete indifference toward doing his job well? Certainly not a noble one. Yet, although most people today have some idea about working at their jobs, they largely have no idea at all as to why they exist. And, worse yet, they don’t even seem to care. You see them in the video saying, “Beats me. Hmm, I’ve never really thought about it before. Well, see ya later!” Moreover, many of those who do feign to propose a purpose propose a purpose centered precisely in self, saying, “I’m just trying to be happy and have a good time.”

Even worse still, not only have far too many people not discovered their purpose in life, but by Satan's wicked plan they do not even bother to ask the question. Isn't that amazing?! Think, for a second, of all the incredible volume of questions that people in our culture routinely ask. *We ask ...* What shall we eat? ... How many calories does that have? ... Does that have mushrooms on it? ... *We wonder ...* What do I need to buy at the store? ... Where can I get the best deal? ... Does that come in green? ... *We ponder ...* What shoes go best with this outfit? ... Do I need a haircut? ... Why don't these pants fit anymore? Given the fact that we are constantly asking questions and searching for information in this life, I find myself flabbergasted that so many people never slow down enough to ask life's most important questions, such as, "Why am I even here at all?" It breaks my heart to see people who have mapped out a detailed television viewing schedule for the entire month of January, but when asked about their purpose in life, they half-heartedly shrug and say something like, "Hmm, don't know, I guess. Never really thought about it before." Or for those of us in Christ, I am amazed how seldom we inquire about our purpose as God's chosen people.

This is, of course, Satan's grand scheme. If he can keep us distracted with bells and whistles, buttons and switches, glitz and glamour, the frivolity and fashions of the world—if he can captivate our attention with the trivial and occupy our time with the useless—then he can prevent us from asking questions that will make us think; he can silence any significant spiritual contemplation; he can avert our eyes from our desperate condition apart from Christ; he can drown out the salvific call of the Spirit. With that in mind, let me now ask you the question at hand: Do you know what your purpose is?

Let me assure you that we can rejoice this morning that our God does indeed have a tremendous purpose for all who have received Jesus Christ as Lord. He has, in fact promised us as much in Jeremiah 29:11, where God says this about His chosen people: "*For I know the plans I have for you,*" declares the LORD, "*plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*" The important point to note here is that the prosperous future that God promises will never come about by the whimsical and routinely selfish motivations of man. No, as followers of Jesus Christ, we must know that any life lived well is a life lived by God's design.

-- Illustration

-- Dad rescues my shed.

-- Just in case you don't believe me about the incredible difference that a knowledgeable designer can make, let me show you a couple of pictures of the difference my dad's help made with my shed:

- Picture #1 – My Shed by My Design
- Picture #2 – My Shed with Dad’s Help

In sincerity, though, if we are wise about living out the purposes for which we have been made by our Creator, we will echo the prayer that Moses voiced in Psalm 90, where he makes the following request of the Lord: *“Establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands.”* Let us, like Moses, devote ourselves to the blissful task of making God’s purposes for us the very purposes in which we daily walk, because only as we go God’s way can we know God’s will.

- Read Luke 4:42-44
- Pray

It is my prayer that, both as individuals and as a congregation, we will make a New Year’s resolution to consistently submit ourselves to the purpose that God has given us. I pray that we will daily endeavor to “Go and tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.” If we are to do so, we must understand three central truths about our calling in Christ. Thus far, we have examined the first two of these three truths.

1.) We are made for a mission.

If you ask me, Luke 4:43 is one of the greatest statements of purpose ever penned. It was first penned by Luke as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and it was written so that we might understand a major aspect of Christ’s mission on earth—to preach the good news of the kingdom of God.

As we have seen in our passage this morning, Jesus was mission-minded, and as He was, so must we be as well. You and I have been made for a mission, and that mission is to introduce people to God. As we have discussed, Christ calls us not only to come unto Him but to go out for Him.

As we have seen, not only are we made for a mission, but...

2.) We are redeemed to reach out.

Christ’s example here shows us that fullness of Christian living comes not only in receiving Him through faith, but also in reaching out and sharing that faith with others, especially with regard to the Good News we have received in the coming of our Lord. We have not been redeemed to recoil, nor have we been restored or retreat. No, we have been redeemed to reach out, and...

That is where we will pick up this vital topic this morning as we continue to consider the powerful purpose for which we have been created by God. Not only are we redeemed to reach out, but...

3.) We are saved to speak up.

As Christians, we are called to be imitators of Christ. In Ephesians 5:1-2, we are commanded to *“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”* If we are going to do as God commands and endeavor to be as much like Jesus as we can be, then we must realize that our God is a God of speech. Think about it: How is it that all of Creation came to be? God *spoke* it into existence. For example, He *said* let there be light, and there was light, and it was good. How were you and I created? Our Heavenly Father spoke, and we were made. Furthermore, how is it that we know God and His will for our lives? God has *spoken* to us through His holy Word. All that we truly know about God is that which He has revealed to us through that which He has *spoken*, primarily in Scripture, but also in Creation. In fact, our God is so much a God of speech that the Gospel of John introduces Jesus Christ as “the Word” in John 1:1-2, which says, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”*

Even in our verses from Luke this morning, we see this remarkable divine characteristic revealed in the earthly ministry of our Lord. He says, *“I must **preach** the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent. And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.”* In these two verses, we clearly see that speech was an essential aspect of Jesus’ mission. And not just any speech, Jesus’ was mission-minded, and an integral aspect of His mission was to testify to the Good News about His coming and His purpose. There can be no doubt that with our salvation comes a mission, and that mission not only calls us to reach out; it also compels us witness to the truth. We are not saved to be silent; we are saved to speak up.

With that said, let me respectfully dispel a popular pithy proverb this morning. Have you ever heard anyone say this about evangelism: “Preach the Gospel, and if necessary, use words.” That sounds nice, doesn’t it? However, the main problem that I find with this saying is that it is an almost completely useless thing to say. Don’t get me wrong, I get the overall point of the proverb, and I will even agree that it hints at the rather profound truth that, when it comes to our profession of faith in Christ, our actions speak louder than our words. That is true enough, and is

a truth that I think we must understand. However, we deceive ourselves if we think that good deeds and godly character alone can be equated with the Gospel. Let me try to explain what I mean by that. You see, the Gospel is not something that you and I can *do*; it is something that Jesus Christ has already *done*. And while our daily attitudes and actions will certainly impact our testimony to the Gospel, they must never be confused with the Gospel itself.

The Gospel is not an emotion; it is a message. If we say, “Preach the Gospel; if necessary use words,” we may as well say, “Eat all you want, and, if necessary, swallow.” Why? Because just as eating requires swallowing, the Gospel requires words. Better yet, the Gospel *is* words! No matter how Christlike our behavior may be, it will never communicate the truth that transforms. Our behavior alone simply cannot inform another person that “[*the Son of God*] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness;” and that “*by his wounds you have been healed*” (1 Peter 2:24). You see, while Christlike character will absolutely amplify the message, it is not itself the message.

In Romans 1:16, Paul declares, “*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*” We must understand that when he says this he is not talking about behavior or a feeling; he is talking about a message, and every message requires a messenger. Surely, we are saved to speak!

-- Application: How can we speak for the glory of God?

1.) Share your testimony.

- Acts 1:8 – “*You will be my witnesses.*” – So be a witness!
- Tell the story of how and when your new life in Christ began.
- Write out and memorize a conversion testimony about 3-4 minutes in length.
- 1 Peter 3:15 – *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

2.) Share your life lessons.

- Inform others of the most important lessons God has taught you.
- Make a list of the major life lessons you have learned since coming to Christ (Mike Croghan’s list).
- Proverbs 25:12 – “*A warning given by an experienced person to someone willing to listen is more valuable than...jewelry made of the finest gold.*”

3.) Share your godly passions.

-- Jeremiah 20:9 – *But if I say, “I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,” his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.”*

-- What aspect of life in Christ are you passionate about? Tell it to others!

-- Galatians 4:18 – *“Now it’s wonderful if you are eager to do good.”*

-- God uses passionate people to advance His kingdom.

-- Not everyone has exactly the same passion (except for the Gospel).

4.) *Share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

-- 2 Corinthians 5:19 – *“For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others.”*

-- Memorize the G.O.S.P.E.L.

-- Witness Protection Program

The general idea with the witness protection program is that a guilty man is saved from prosecution so that he will freely testify to the truth. So it is with us in Christ. Just like those in the witness protection program, we are certainly not spared to stay silent. We are saved to speak up. We have been released to relate the truth. Moreover, just like witness protection, the requirement to speak up is a necessary consequence of accepting the pardon.

As much as there are similarities here, there are, at the same time, glorious differences. Whereas the government witness points out the guilty, the Christian witness points out the Savior. Whereas the government witness helps bring the guilty to punishment, the Christian witness helps bring the guilty to grace. Whereas the government witness reveals those who must pay for their sins, the Christian witness reveals the One who has already paid for every sin.

In Christ, we find ourselves in a different type of witness protection program. We are called to witness to a lost world so that they will come to believe and find protection from the wages of sin and the wrath of God. Let me ask you, are your friends and family protected from the righteous judgment of God by the blood of Jesus Christ? Let us testify to the truth and pray that God will save them and protect them from the coming wrath.

Let me close this morning with a quote from author and pastor Rick Warren, who wrote, “The Bible says ‘[God] does not want anyone to be lost, but he wants all people to change their hearts and lives.’ As long as you know one person who does not know Christ, you *must* keep praying for them, serving them in love, and sharing the Good News. And as long as there is one person in your community who isn’t in the family of God, your church *must* keep reaching out. The church that doesn’t want to grow is saying to the world, ‘You can go to hell.’”

-- With that in mind, let me ask you:

-- What are you willing to do so that the people you know will go to heaven?

-- Is anyone going to be in heaven because of what you have allowed God to do through you?

-- The eternal salvation of another person is more important than anything else you will ever have a hand in this life, because only people will last forever.

In conclusion, let us heed the call of Romans 10:13-15, which says, “*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*” *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”*

God has made us for a mission. We have been redeemed to reach out and saved to speak up. Let us each one walk with the beautiful feet of those who go forth and accomplish our mission for the glory of God.

New Year's Prayer Resolutions

-- Pray through our motto for mission

-- Pray for our church according to 1 Thessalonians 1:?, 2:8

-- Pray for our leaders according to ?