

Message #1067
Rev. Jack C. Longley

"DISCOVERING GOD'S PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE"

{Ephesians 1: 3-14}

Trinity Presbyterian Church

September 12, 2004

DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE

There's a bumper sticker that says: "Life is too precious to waste!"

...but, how do you do that?

...how do you prevent wasting your life?

I want you to read with me three scripture verses found in Ephesians 5: 15-17 {page 1227}...

"Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

...notice the word "careful"

...it says, "be careful how you live"

Now, the opposite of "careful" is "careless!"

...it says, "don't be careless!"

...the literal Greek translation is: "Don't stumble through life, don't just drift through life."

Think it through--know WHAT you're here for, KNOW your PURPOSE, and "make the most of every opportunity...be wise...{and} try to understand what God wants you to do!"

...how many of you would like to know what God wants you to do with your life?

You're in luck. Starting today and continuing for the next 40 days we're going to look intently at what God wants you to do with your life.

We're going to look at 5 PURPOSES that God has created you for and it's going to be an exciting journey.

I want to focus on three important questions this morning as we prepare ourselves for the next 40 days...

1. What does God want?

2. What does it take?

3. Why should I do it?

I. WHAT DOES GOD WANT FROM MY LIFE?

or...

{HOW MUCH OF MY LIFE DOES GOD WANT?}

Read through your Bible and you'll discover that God wants your whole life!

...there's not a single verse in the Bible that says you can be a Christian and live your life any way you want!

...God wants ALL of you!

...not 10%

...not 50%

...not 99 44/100% of you

...He wants ALL of you!

Look at Romans 6: 13 with me {page 1182}...

"...offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness."

C. S. Lewis once said: "The only thing Christianity cannot be is moderately important!"

IF the message of Christianity is really true it deserves everything we've got--it cannot be "moderately important" in our lives!
Look at Deuteronomy 10:12 {page 195}--
"...what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord with ALL your soul."
...with God, it's ALL or nothing
...you can't sit on the fence
Joshua gave the challenge: "Choose today whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"
...how about you?
...have you made that decision?
...not only to follow Christ...but to follow Him with ALL your heart...your ENTIRE being?
Jesus made great demands of those who follow Him--
"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money!" {Matthew 6:24}
...every one of us has priorities
...where does the Lord fit on your priority scale?
...God demands FIRST PLACE in your life!
Jesus invited a man to follow him one day and the guy replied: "Okay, I will follow You; but Lord, let me first go take care of some things...!"
..."Let me first" is a contradiction
...You cannot say "Lord" and "me first" at the same time.
...You must decide who will be Lord of your life!
Jesus told another story about a king who planned a big banquet and invited everybody to attend; however, people began to make excuses.
..."I just bought a field and I must go and see it--please excuse me!"
..."I just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out--please excuse me!"
..."I just got married--please excuse me--I cannot come!"
Think about this for a minute...it's like these guys are invited to attend a dinner in the State Room of the White House by the President of the United States and they all turn down the invitation...
...the first person uses their wealth as an excuse--they just bought some land and have to go look at it
...the second person used his work as an excuse--he had to go plow his field
...the third guy used his wife as an excuse--he just got married!
Question: What excuse are you giving to God for putting yourself first?
..."Lord, let me do this first, and then I'll follow You!"
I'll let you in on a secret this morning: if you would put God first in your life, He'll take care of everything else.
Look at Proverbs 3:6 {page 665}--
"...in ALL your ways acknowledge Him, and He WILL make your paths straight"
..."He WILL direct your paths"
...there's the key to success!
...in EVERYTHING you do...put God first!

II. WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

What does it take not to waste my life?

What does it take to become ALL that God wants us to be?

What does it take to develop myself to my fullest potential spiritually?

Answer: DISCIPLINE!

Look at Proverbs 10:17 {page 672}--

"He who heeds DISCIPLINE shows the way to life!"

...discipline and disciple come from the same word

...you cannot be a disciple without being disciplined!

In I Timothy 4:7 we read: "...train/discipline yourself to be Godly!"

...discipline is doing the difficult now in order to enjoy the benefit later!

...some of you are very disciplined...

...you plan your day--you're always on time

...you're disciplined in your work

...you're conscientious about your work habits

...you're disciplined in your physical workouts

...some would never miss your favorite TV show

We are all disciplined in the areas we want to be!

...for instance, you never miss a meal!

...it's part of our daily regimen

But, how many are disciplined to have a daily quiet time--a time to be alone with the Lord?

...I'm going to ask you for 15 minutes a day for the next 40 days

...one of the major goals of the 40 Days of Purpose which we will begin today is to help you develop some new spiritual disciplines.

Look at I Timothy 4:7 {page 1245}--"...train yourself to be Godly..."

The Living Bible Translation is: "Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit."

...the next 40 days is going to be a time of disciplined training

...and we're going to do it together as a team

...getting and keep spiritually fit!

I want you to look up Hebrews 12:1 {page 1263} and read it out loud with me...

"...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us!"

...let us confess sin that hinders our relationship with God

...rid ourselves of that which weighs us down spiritually

Some of you have overcrowded schedules. I'm going to ask you to say "no" to those things that are weighing you down and say "yes" to the 40 Days of Purpose Challenge with a minimum of 15 minutes a day devoted to this.

The Psalmist says God gives us on the average 70...maybe 80 years. Rick Warren says in the introduction to his book, "The Purpose Driven Life" that we all live an average of 25,550 days. I computed that today is my 24,764th day. Like you, I am asking myself--what am I going to do with the rest of the days I have? How can I make the most of my time?

Turn to Philippians 2:13 {Page 1230} and say it with me...

"It is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose!"

...God places within each of the desire

...He then gives us the willpower

If you get serious and make the choice to take the 40 Day Challenge and say...

"God, in these next 40 days, there are some things I will cut out of my life in order to make time to develop some new habits so that I might grow closer to you, and that you might have ALL of me, not just part of me, but ALL of me!"

...God will help you

...God will bless you beyond anything you can anticipate this morning

You ask: What does God want? Every part of you! That's what He wants.

Finally...

III. WHY SHOULD I DO IT?

Why should you make an effort to grow spiritual these 40 days?
Why should I let go of some things to make time for God in my life?
...the benefits to your life here and now will be incredible
...and the benefits lasting forever in eternity are not even measurable
The real question: How can you afford not to do it?

...lives are going to be changed
...families are going to be saved
...friendships are going to be made
...miracles are going to happen

In the next 40 days--

...you are to read one chapter a day from the book "The Purpose Driven Life"
...attend worship each week for the next six Sundays
...whenever possible attend the class following worship where we will break up into small groups and discuss what's happening in our lives together
...spend time in prayer as you seek to discover God's purpose for you!
...15 minutes a day is all I'm asking...

CONCLUSION

I'm going to ask you now to take out the COVENANT found in your bulletin this morning. I'm going to ask you to complete it--as individuals or as a family. As we sing the final verse of the closing hymn I want you to bring this forward, place it on the table, and stand before me and we're going to have a prayer of commitment together as we begin this challenge.

When we've finished I going to ask you to find someone who will be your prayer partner as you begin this challenge for 40 days.