

ESF, Lord's day service message
11/11/2018

Finding and Fulfilling the Purpose of Life
Jeremiah 1:4-10

⁴ The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." ⁶ "Alas, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young." ⁷ But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

⁹ Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

In ancient Israel, king Solomon had power, wealth and wisdom. He was the wisest man that ever lived. He wrote 3000 proverbs, 100 songs (1 King 4:32), and 3 books in the Bible - Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs. His fame was widespread and people came from afar to hear him. However, he confessed that he didn't find the meaning of life in all those achievements: "*Meaningless! Meaningless! Everything is meaningless!*" (Ecclesiastes 12:8).

If you do not find the true purpose of your life, after you have achieved or gained everything you can, you will always ask "so what?" and feel meaningless and empty. But if you know for sure what the purpose of your life is, you can live your life with a clear focus. You can do your best in whatever you do for that purpose. When you achieve something

you will never feel meaningless. When you fall down you will always get up and keep pursuing the purpose.

Then how can you find the purpose of your life? And if you do find the purpose of your life how can you fulfill it?

Finding the purpose of life

What is the purpose of man's life? This question is connected to another question, "From where did my life come from? What is the meaning of my life? For what do I have to live?" Throughout human history, men have been struggling to find answers to these questions through meditation, science, philosophy and religion.

But the Bible clearly shows us where man's life came from and what the purpose of man's life is. The Bible says that if we want to know what the purpose of man's life is, we must not begin with ourselves but begin with God, the Creator of our lives. After Solomon made the point that everything is meaningless, he concluded that man can find the purpose of life only in his relationship with God: "...*here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind*" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

In verse 5, God told Jeremiah where his life came from and for what purpose his life was: *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,* The verb "formed" is "yazar" in the original Hebrew text. It means "created." So by saying "I formed you," God claims that He created Jeremiah and decided the purpose of his life. God's such claim is not only for Jeremiah but for all men. The Bible says, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them*" (Genesis 1:27). Then why did God create man in his own image? Let's hear what God says, "*Let us make man in our image, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures*" (Genesis

1:26). So the purpose of every man's life is to live for God's plan which is to rule over all creatures and to give glory to God (Genesis 1:31).

The purpose of your life is to live for God's plan and to give glory to Him.

We can find God's specific plan for our lives, when we hear God's call for us. In verse 5, God told Jeremiah: *before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations*. God told Jeremiah that his life was destined to live for God's call. The call was to live as a prophet to the nations in his time. In that call, God gave Jeremiah the specific purpose of his life.

That word is not only for Jeremiah, but also for all of us. Although nobody can be just like Jeremiah, the principle of life's purpose in God's call is the same to all. It is that God forms every man's life with plan and God calls every man to live for that plan. When we listen to God's word carefully, we find that our lives were formed by God who gave a unique plan to the life of each one of us.

You are not Jeremiah. Nobody can be Jeremiah. God's call for Jeremiah was different from the call of other servants of God- Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Elijah, Isaiah etc. God does not call you to live your life the same way others live, but calls you to live in different and unique ways. God does not call you to live like Jeremiah or anybody else. God calls you to be yourself. You were designed by God for a specific purpose. Some are shorter, some taller, some skinny, some chubby, some have brown eyes, some have blue eyes. No matter what you are, God loves you and will use you the way you are. As God does not create anybody the same as another person, God's call for each individual is unique. So find out what God's call is for you.

If you are a believer of Christ, you are called by God to remain in Christ and bear fruit. You are called to give glory to God through the fruit: *If a man remains in me, he will bear much fruit...This is to my Father's glory...*" (John 15:5-8). You have an absolute purpose in your life to live for that call. Even if you are not as capable as others are, even if you don't have as much as others do, you have God's unique call for your life. And in that call, your life has a unique purpose and value. So if you think or feel that your life is nothing, and has no value because of what you are not or what you do not have, remember the precious value of your life in Christ.

The story is told of an American tourist in Paris who bought an amber necklace in a trinket shop. The price was not that expensive. When he arrived at New York and went through customs he was shocked at the high duty he had to pay. When he came home, he had the necklace appraised, and the jeweler told him he would give \$25,000 for the necklace. He was stunned and suspected that there was a reason for the high offer. He took the necklace to an expert who appraised it at an astronomical amount. When he asked the appraiser what made the necklace so valuable, he told him to look into the magnifying glass and see for himself. When he placed his eye next to the glass, he saw an inscription which read: "From Napoleon Bonaparte to Josephine." It was the name on the necklace that gave it extraordinary worth.

Inscribed on your life is the name of your Owner- Jesus Christ. You are special because through the blood of Christ, His name is inscribed on your life. He has made you with His own hands and written His name across your life. Your value is found in that inscription. You belong to Him and He wants to use your life. He has made you and you are His. No one else can take your place in His heart. And neither can anyone else take your place in this world.

Fulfilling the purpose of Life

When God told Jeremiah the purpose God gave to his life, he was afraid to accept it. The purpose was to live as a prophet: *I appointed you as a prophet to the nations*. When hearing this purpose, Jeremiah felt completely inadequate to live for that purpose. So he said: *"Ah, Sovereign LORD, I do not know how to speak; I am only a child."*

That is a common response when people hear God's call. When Moses was called to lead the Israelites out of Egypt he said to God, *"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"* (Exodus 3:11), *"O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue"* (Exodus 4:10). When God called Gideon to fight against the oppressing enemy of his country, he said *"how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family"* (Judges 6:15).

When Jeremiah told God that he was unable to follow the call, God said to him: *Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you...* (verses 7-8).

God encouraged Jeremiah with these words that he would fulfill the purpose of his life not with his own ability, but with God's empowerment and help. God assured him that He would always be with him to enable him to accomplish the purpose of his life.

God assured Moses and Gideon with the same word: *"I will be with you"* (Exodus 3:12; Judges 6:16).

When Jesus called his disciples to preach His gospel to people all over the world, they were overwhelmed by the impossible mission. Then with the same word Jesus assured them that they could accomplish the

mission: “*Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*” (Matthew 28:20).

David Livingstone first sailed for a new mission to inland Africa. He was met at the dock by some of his friends. They were afraid for his safety. They tried to persuade him not to go. But Livingstone opened his Bible and read Jesus’ final words in Matthew 28:20: “*Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” Livingstone then turned to his friends and said, “That, my friend, is the word of the Lord. Let us be going.”

Sixteen years later, Livingstone went back home to Scotland to raise money and challenge more people to serve as missionaries. Those 16 years had been extremely difficult. Livingstone suffered 27 times from different fevers. Once, he was attacked by a lion. But he did not die. Although physically he became older and weaker, his spirit and faith became stronger.

As David Livingstone spoke to the students at Glasgow University, the heart of his message was in these words: “Shall I tell you what sustained me amidst the toil, the hardship and loneliness of my exile? -- It was Christ’s promise: ‘*Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*’”

When God calls us to do something we have never thought or dreamed about, we may feel completely inadequate to follow the call. But God gives us the same promise that He will be with us always. With this promise we can overcome the feeling of inadequacy or fear and fulfill the purpose of our lives.

God also gave Jeremiah the gift he needed to fulfill the purpose in verse 9: *Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “Now, I have put my words in your mouth.”* God gave Jeremiah

the gift of His words to fulfill his life's purpose. To live the call as a prophet, what Jeremiah needed most was the gift of God's words.

Jesus gives all believers two common purposes. 1). It is to be the witness of His death on the cross and the resurrection. 2). It is to build church which is His body.

To help them fulfill the first purpose, Jesus empowers them with the Holy Spirit: *you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*" (Acts 1:8). With the power of the Spirit we believers fulfill the purpose of being the witness of Jesus.

To help them fulfill the second purpose, the Holy Spirit gives each believers different gifts. Do not compare your gift with other people's gifts. Although you and other people may think that your gift is insignificant, it is as important as all the other gifts in building up God's kingdom (1 Cor. 12:21-26).

When Jesus called the 12 disciples, He did not make them people of one gift. Jesus did not try to change their gifts. Jesus encouraged each one of them to serve God with their different gifts. As God's call for each one of us is different, so the gifts for fulfilling that call is different.

God has given you potential and the ability to fulfill His call for your life. There will always be someone with more ability than you have, but there will never be someone who has exactly the same gift as yours and there will be no one who can do exactly what you can do with your gift. So stop comparing your gift (or talent) with other people's gifts (or talents). Whatever gift you may have even if it is small or seemingly insignificant, use that gift to serve the Lord and people with a thankful heart. Then the Lord will enable you to fulfill the purpose of your life. You will always live with contentment.