

What on earth am I here for? Ministry

Week 5 of 40 Days of Purpose

Message for Sunday, November 17, 2013
based on a message by Rick Warren

Scripture: Matthew 20:28-34; 22:39

Children's Message: John 13:4-15, Jesus washes the disciples' feet.

I interviewed Nancy Shier, a nurse in the congregation. We started by talking about how many people she has washed. She loved it all; she was helping people. "Even someone with gangrene? Tell the children what gangrene smells like." Pretty gross! But even there, she was helping someone to feel better.

Where was Jesus in the picture? "He was with me all the time, like sitting on my shoulder."

Message

1) Our purpose: love others, give yourself away

Today we're looking at the fourth purpose God has for our lives. Our starting point is the passage known as "The Great Commandment." Here it is from Matthew's gospel; someone is asking Jesus what God wants us to do with our lives. This person asked Jesus which is the most important commandment.

Matthew 22:37-39, Today's English Version:
Jesus answered, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.' "

Our purpose in life is to love. So many people are buying lottery tickets, hoping to win big. God tells us to do the opposite: to give ourselves away. Love is basically giving yourself away. Our first purpose is to love God, and we give our whole lives to God. We call that "worship", and now we go on to the next part: love other people.

There's a word the Bible uses for "loving others." Actually, there are two words, which both mean the same thing. They are "service" and "ministry." When you love people – I mean in the practical sense of actually *doing* something for them, rather than just having warm fuzzy feelings towards others – you are *servicing* them or *ministering* to them. When you do that, you are being a *servant* or a *minister*. And what you do is called *service* or *ministry*.

When we say the word "minister" most people think of a preacher, a priest or that kind of church leader. But the Bible says that every Christian is a minister. Look again at what Jesus said about loving our neighbours. Do you see where it says, "This is only for people who are paid church leaders?" No! It's not there. Ministry simply means helping somebody in the name of Jesus. So all of us are called to ministry.

I want you to turn to the person next to you and say, "You are a minister." Go ahead, say that right now. All believers are ministers. All women here are ministers. All men here are ministers. All little kids, all older people. If we're followers of Jesus Christ, we're all called to serve, to be ministers.

2) Be like Jesus: be a servant

Now the good news is that God not only created us for service, he gave us a model. He came to earth himself and said, "This is how you do it. Watch me, and then you follow me." Listen to what Jesus said:

Matthew 20:28, Living Bible:

"Your attitude must be like my own, for I, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many."

Be like Jesus. That was the theme of last week's purpose, when we talked about discipleship. Ministry is just another way of doing that.

Trevor Ferrell was eleven years old when he saw a television news report on homeless people living in his city, Philadelphia. The young boy couldn't believe people actually lived on the streets. When he questioned his parents, Frank and Janet reluctantly agreed to broaden their son's sheltered horizons — and their own. They left their home in an exclusive suburb and drove downtown. One block past city hall, they spotted a thin body crumpled on the sidewalk. While his parents watched a bit apprehensively, Trevor got out of the car and approached the man.

"Sir," he said, "here's a blanket for you." The man stared up at Trevor at first. Then, he softly said, "Thank you, God bless you."

That encounter altered the Ferrells' lives forever. Night after night they drove downtown, trying in small ways to help the street people. They emptied their home of extra blankets, clothing, and dozens of peanut-butter sandwiches. When others learned what they were doing, someone donated a van and volunteers charted nightly food distribution routes. There are now places around the city where people can drop off blankets and food for homeless people.

The President of the United States called him and asked what he was doing, and why. He said simply, “It’s Jesus inside of me that makes me want to do this.”

That’s our purpose: to be like Jesus, to be a servant.

3) **Serving like Jesus means being available**

We just read Matthew 20:28. Let’s continue that passage, and see how Jesus actually lives this principle of serving, of giving yourself away.

Matthew 20:29-34, New Living Translation:

As Jesus and the disciples left the city of Jericho, a huge crowd followed behind. Two blind men were sitting beside the road. When they heard that Jesus was coming that way, they began shouting, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!” The crowd told them to be quiet, but they only shouted louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

Jesus stopped in the road and called, “What do you want me to do for you?”

“Lord,” they said, “we want to see!” Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Instantly they could see! Then they followed him.

There’s a key word in that passage. A very important word. It says that Jesus *stopped*. If you want to be used by God, if you want to serve God, you must be willing to be interrupted.

Most of Jesus’ ministry and most of Jesus’ miracles were interruptions. Think about it. All the people he healed...the woman who was bleeding, the blind man, the dead child...all of them were interruptions.

What counts most of all isn’t your *ability* but your *availability*.

What keeps us from being available? Why do so many people say, “I’d like to be able to help, but I’m not available.”

The number one enemy of compassion is busyness. We just get too busy! And because I’m so busy, I don’t have time to serve. I’ve got my agenda, my plans, my dreams, my goals, my ambitions. You know what the problem is? We hang this (hold up a “Do not disturb” sign) on the door of our heart. We do it all the time. I’ve got my safe little life going here, so don’t disturb me for the needs of other people.”

There was a professor who was working hard writing his next book, and was getting more and more frustrated by the students from his classes who kept coming to his office to ask questions or seek advice. One day – it was

just like someone turning on the light in a dark house – it occurred to him that those students were not interruptions in his life. They were his purpose in life. That changed his whole outlook, not just at work, but elsewhere as well.

Real servants don’t mind being interrupted. If you really have a servant heart, like Jesus Christ, you don’t mind being interrupted because your agenda is God’s agenda. I read about a teenage girl who heard a sermon on ministry, and she taped a card to the mirror in her room, so she’d see it every day: “I am God’s servant. What will he have me do today?”

Whenever you see a need right in front of you, guess what? God is giving you the opportunity to practice serving. God is giving you the opportunity to become like Jesus Christ. Sure it will mean interrupting your plans for that day. But maybe God has a bigger purpose for your life than what you had planned for that day.

Next Steps:

- Allow yourself to dream: how can I serve someone else? Be creative!
- When opportunity knocks, answer the door! In other words, when God puts someone in your path, don’t count that as an interruption, but an opportunity to put love into practice.