

Fulfilling Your Ultimate Purpose

Sunday, August 11th, 2024 - 10:00 a.m.

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FULFILLING YOUR ULTIMATE PURPOSE

I believe everybody in the church is a leader. I believe every one of us has a ministry that God wants us to walk in. And maybe your ministry is different to the person besides you. And that's fine. We need all kinds of ministries and all kinds of roles in the church. But whatever your ministry is, we as a church want to prepare you for that and give you opportunities to use it because each of us not only have a ministry, but we have a mission to fulfill. In the same way, this church has a mission. And in case you have never seen our mission, when you leave the foyer this morning, look on the wall by the financial services desk. It's hanging right there. It used to be in the café, but this summer, we moved it to the foyer so that it would be more visible and a great reminder to each of us what our mission as a church is. Let me just say that our mission is not just something to put on the wall or in a bulletin like we used to, it's our mission, or some people might use the word purpose. I think those words are interchangeable, mission or purpose. It's what we exist for. I don't believe that we get to choose a mission. I don't believe that we get to choose a purpose or just decide what we're here for. I believe that our mission has already been set by the head of the church. It's been set by Jesus and He gave it to us. If you read all those red words in your Bible, Jesus said a lot, didn't he, but he specifically gave three commands to the church. And these are Jesus' commands for ever for the church.

A) THE GREAT COMMANDMENT (WE SEEK GOD'S FACE)

He gave us what we call the great commandment. We find that in Matthew chapter 22, he says, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment"** (Matthew 22:37 – 38).

Actually, that was already spoken in the Old Testament. But Jesus picked it up and he said, No, this is THE great commandment. And he gave it to his church. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength."

That's what we're here for above everything, is to love God.

B) A NEW COMMANDMENT (WE SERVE GOD'S PEOPLE)

Secondly, Jesus gave us what we call the new commandment, the new commandment in John chapter 13. He said, **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just**

as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (John 13:34). In other words, in the same way that I have loved you, that you love one another. So he was talking about our relationship with our Christian brothers and sisters. It is agape love. It is fully committed, sacrificial, practical, love. Because it's practical love, it means we're here for each other, we're here to build each other up, to help one another.

C) THE GREAT COMMISSION (WE PROCLAIM SALVATION)

And then thirdly, Jesus gave us what we call the Great Commission. Matthew chapter 28, right before He ascended into heaven, he spoke to His disciples, He spoke to the church. And he said, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20).**

So that is the final part of each of our own mission statements, each of us has that mission, to change the world, and nothing less. And every local church has a part in that, don't we, in changing the world, from our front door all the way to the end of the earth. And every time you come in on a Sunday, look up on the wall, remind yourself, that's what we're here for, to seek God's face, serve His people and change the world by proclaiming salvation. We didn't pick it, Jesus picked us to do it. It's his three commands. So this morning, I want us to really start at the very beginning. At the first and most foundational point of our mission together as God's people, I want to talk about seeking God's face. And specifically, I want to talk about our highest calling in life. I want to stir you to fulfill your ultimate purpose.

Did you know that you and I, all of us in this room, have the very same highest calling. Every one of us the same ultimate purpose. I'm called to preach and teach and pastor and that is a high calling in my life, I consider that a high calling. But it's not my highest calling. And you have different gifts than I have, you have a different role than I have, you have different passions that God has given to you. But your highest calling is the same as mine. It's exactly the same. And we're gonna get into that in just one minute. But before we do, let me just say, like the preacher said, I want to say something before I preach.

And here it is. When it comes to growing in your calling from God, when it comes to growing in any calling that you have from the Lord. When it comes to spiritual growth, when it comes to personal growth, did you know that there is a superpower for that? There's a superpower for growing in your walk with the Lord, something that will always accelerate your growth. And there are two men in the Bible that are great examples of this, one in the Old Testament, and one in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, one of the most famous characters or the most beautiful characters is King David, listen to he said in Psalm 86, verse 11, **“Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.” (Psalm 86:11)**

That's a superpower. **“Unite my heart to fear your name.”** We'll come back to that in a second. The apostle Paul in the New Testament said this in Philippians three, verses 13 to 14 He says, **“Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, [14] I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13 – 14)**

Did you spot the superpower? It's this. **Focus**. Focus. We live in the ADHD generation don't we? The age of multitasking. We have never been so distracted, in any generation before this. We have screens everywhere, devices, messaging going off all the time. But God wants you to break free from that and to focus all of your energy, your attention, your time, everything that you have on walking with God and the call that he's placed upon you. And I promise you, if you can focus on one thing in your life, it will accelerate your growth in that thing. That thing will change.

So can we start to challenge and really encourage one another this morning, to focus on what is most important, let's look together at what is the highest calling that we have. It's my highest calling, and it's your highest calling. Let's look at it together. John chapter four, starting at verse 19. Jesus is talking with the Samaritan woman at the well.

“The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. [20] Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people

ought to worship.” [21] Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. [22] You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. [23] But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”
(John 4:19 – 24)

Now, many of you, I'm sure will be very familiar with this story, Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well. And just to get a little background on this, a community well, in those days back in the first century, was not just a utility, it wasn't just a place where you pump water. But a community well was a meeting place, it was like a coffee shop. The local well in a town was like Starbucks, because that's where you went. And you caught up on the gossip, it's like the water cooler at the workplace. It was a place where you sat down with colleagues and you chewed the fat and you caught up with things that you haven't spoken about for a little while.

So, especially the women would come together at those local villages and towns and they would get the daily water morning and evening, and they would talk and they would share together. But this story in John chapter four starts with something different. If you go back up to verse six, John tells us that this encounter of the woman at the well with Jesus happened at the six hour of the day. Do you know what time that is? It's not six in the morning. It's noon time. It's the middle of the day. You've got to look at the Jewish clock and the Jewish clock began early in the morning, but by the six hour, it was noon time. So it was the heat of the day.

This was not the time that you will expect to find the women going to get water from the well. Usually, they gathered in the cooler hours of the morning, cool hours of the evening. But this woman is at the well at noon, and she's all by herself, which tells us something. She's avoiding the crowd. She's trying to be by herself. She's alone, because she's a woman who's carrying a lot of shame, isn't she? She is the town outcast. Five failed marriages. And now she's living with a man that she's not even married to. And in the culture of the day this was disgraceful and she was an outcast.

For Jesus even to speak to her, in fact, would have been a bit scandalous and you get a clue of that because by the end of the story, when the disciples returned, they were stunned that Jesus was talking to her. You can see it in their words. They're stunned that he's talking to her because he's Jewish, and she's a Samaritan. They didn't usually talk to each other. He's a man and men in that culture did not speak to women alone unless it was your wife or your daughter. You didn't speak to a woman alone. He's a rabbi, a man of God, a teacher of the word and she is a woman with quite a reputation. And so they're stunned that he would talk to her. But here he is talking with her. And there's more.

Maybe what a lot of people miss in this story is how John sets it up. Because if you read it, he gives us the beginning of the story much like we've heard many stories in the Bible before. Do you know what this story is? You get a man at a well and a woman there. It's a boy meets girl story. Culturally, it's a boy meets girl story. And they come there and they meet at the well. I mean, go back to the Old Testament. Remember all the guys that found their wives at wells? The ones who went there, and sometimes there was a messenger who was sent there, but it all happened at the town well. Well, it's a boy meets girl story.

But in John's story, as he tells it, it takes a different turn because Jesus is not interested in this woman for the reason that all other men have been interested in her. He's no ordinary man. Yes, he is going to change her life like no other man ever has. But he's not coming as Prince Charming, he's not coming with any ulterior motive. He is her Creator and her God, and he's coming to be her saviour.

And that's the story. It's a radical turn on the boy meets girl story. But now what does Jesus talk to her about? Their conversation, very interestingly, centres on worship, doesn't it? He talks to her about worship, she talks to him about worship, and you think to yourself with everything that's going on in her life, with all of her problems, that's a bit of an unusual topic, isn't it? To talk about worship?

But no. you see, God's great plan in all of history is about turning rebels into worshipers. That's what God's great plan is about, turning rebels into worshipers, nothing less than that. The story of the Bible is this, that God is on a great quest. All of history is his story, about his purpose in act after act, in the creation of the world, in the fall of man, in him sending His Son to be an

atonement and to redeem mankind back, in the mission that he sent the disciples on. All of these things are leading to the day when in heaven, and on a new earth, everything is filled with the glorious free praises of creatures before God's throne. The people have surrendered themselves and of their own free hearts, they are worshipping God. That's exactly what Jesus says to her here, John 4 verse 23. Look at verse 23: **“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.” (John 4:23)**

He's seeking worshippers and a particular kind of worshipers, those who will worship in spirit and in truth, that is God's great quest. God is seeking true worshipers. If you miss that, you will reduce the Bible to being something very much less than God intended. You see, humans are worshipers by nature, we were created to worship, we were made to worship and if you are not worshipping God, you will find something else to worship.

To the degree that you are not worshipping God fully with your whole heart, you will give parts of your heart to other things and worship those things. That's what we are by nature, we are worshipers. You will worship a statue or you'll worship a tree or you'll worship anything or just yourself. But human beings are worshipers. Note what Jesus says here in verse 23. He says, **the true worshipers, the true worshipers**, that means there must be false worshipers. God is seeking the true worshipers, so there must be false worshipers.

Jesus did not just say God is on a quest to get people worshipping. Because we're already worshipping. But mostly our worship is wrong, it is false worship as you look out at the world today. Romans one, verse 25, says this, **“Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!” (Romans 1:25)**

They made all kinds of images of creatures and they worship them, and they worship themselves. They worship the creature rather than the Creator. Man worships the wrong thing from the wrong heart. We worship our own way, instead of God's way. But we worship nevertheless. So Jesus says that the Father is seeking true worshipers, but then he adds something that helps us to understand what true worship is, in the next verse, verse 24, **“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)**

That's true worship, it's to worship in spirit and in truth. Well, let me ask you, what does it mean to worship in spirit? What does that mean? And you might say, "Oh, well, it's obvious. But actually, there's been a lot of debate over this. Scholars have gone back and forth over what Jesus meant when he talked about worshiping in spirit and in truth, and it's been taken to mean a couple of different things. Some Bible scholars see it as a reference to the human spirit. Okay, spirit with a small "s", my spirit, you have a spirit, I have a spirit, the human spirit. So we worship God with our spirit that is from the heart, from the inner man.

But then there are other scholars who say, No, this word spirit here should have a capital "S", it's referring to the Holy Spirit, it's referring to God's Spirit, we should use a capital and say, God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship him by the Holy Spirit.

Well, which interpretation is correct? Without hesitation, I say that they are clearly both correct. There is no dispute here at all. Jesus' words encompass both ideas, you see, whichever way you take it, it really amounts to the same thing. Christian worship is radically different from every other kind of worship in the world. To worship in spirit means at least three things. I'm going to give you three things really quickly.

1) WORSHIP IN SPIRIT IS WORSHIP THAT IS IN THE REALM OF THE SPIRIT

In other words, in the spiritual realm, why is it important to say that? People fashion false gods for themselves with their hands, things made out of wood and stone, or they replace God with money, or with pleasure or with self. All human worship has a tendency to degenerate into being focused on what is material and what is sensual. We want to worship what we can touch, and what we can see. Because seeing is believing, right? And these are the statements people use, they say, "you know, you got to be able to touch it, you got to be able to see it." So we want to worship what we can touch and see, religion is filled with statues and icons, and candles and beads.

And we want to worship in a way that is pleasing to ourselves, our senses, our instincts, our passions. If you take away the Bible, if we didn't have the Bible, or we weren't reading the Bible, which is God revealing himself and how he is to be worshipped. If we took that away,

man will always create a golden calf for himself. Always! We will create something we can see, touch, handle, and we will worship that. And it is against all of this man-made worship, this sensual materialistic worship, that Jesus says **“True worship is in spirit.”**

It's in the spiritual realm. God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. True worship is not about the external things of places and buildings and coming at the right time and having the ornaments and the accessories. How many of you are glad you can wake up in the morning, roll out of bed and worship God and God loves it. And God receives it, and He's our father and he communes with us. Because it's not about those external things. True worship is from the heart and it is for God, it is Spirit to Spirit.

2) WORSHIP THAT IS IN SPIRIT IS WORSHIP THAT FULLY ENGAGES THE SPIRIT OF MAN

Here is the core of God's quest. The Father, Jesus said, is seeking such to worship him. He's seeking people to whom worship is not a duty, but whose hearts are engaged, who worship in spirit with their whole inner man, with their whole being. There are some, I'm not criticizing churches on the whole, I'm just saying that there are some houses of worship that have a sign out front that says, “Times of worship” and they should be sued for false advertising. Because it's got nothing to do with worship, not real worship. Because there's no true worship involved. Hearts are not engaged. They're going through a ritual. They're going through a rote thing.

Christian worship is in spirit. It's with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. It is never on autopilot. And listen, autopilot can happen in any church. You go to a church that calls themselves Pentecostal or charismatic, that doesn't mean anything. We could go on autopilot very easily, you can fall back into that. But true worship is worship that engages us, the spirit of man.

3) WORSHIP IN SPIRIT IS WORSHIP THAT IS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

I so appreciate our worship team, they do a great job. But ultimately, the great worship leader of our church is not just the one up front with the microphone, the Lord will use somebody who's leading the congregation. But ultimately, the great worship leader of the

church is the Holy Spirit. It's him. Real Christian worship has to start with him, with the Spirit because you cannot even begin to worship until you have been made spiritually alive by him, until you've been born again. You can't worship, you're not even connected with God, you've got to be born again. And then after we're born again, our worship is led by the Spirit. It is empowered by the Spirit. He teaches us the Word of God, he points us to Jesus as the centre of our worship, the Holy Spirit is the orchestrator of our worship. He's the LIFE GIVING SPIRIT. And when he comes into you, no more mere religion, he creates in us a new desire for God and His Word, a love for Jesus, and urgency and a vibrancy about our walk with God.

And when the life giving spirit comes into a whole church, no more business as usual. No sterile services, no ceremony, no more pew warmers just going through the motions, because God is here. And God is moving.

Samuel Chadwick said, *"The presence of the Spirit is vital and central to the work of the church. Worship is idolatry until the Holy Spirit inspires worship, preaching is powerless. If it be not a demonstration of the Spirit. Prayer is vain unless the spirit energizes it. It's all by the Holy Spirit."* The Bible gives us a very clear warning and we need to hear this warning. It's found in 1 Thessalonians 5:19. Here's the warning. The Bible warns us not to quench the Spirit.

If we quench the Spirit, then what worship is happening? What of life, what of value is going on if the Spirit is quenched? 1 Thessalonians 5:19 says **"Do not quench the Spirit."** Now look at that word. See that word quench? It's the Greek word *"sbennymi"* and it means to extinguish. That word is always used without exception, it is always used to refer to putting out a flame or a fire. That's what it means. So when JB Phillips was translating the New Testament, and he got to 1 Thessalonians 5:19 "Do not quench the Spirit," he translated it very accurately like this, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire."

How do you put out a fire? There are several ways to put out a fire and I think they're very illustrative. First of all, you can douse a fire. How do you douse the fire of the Spirit in the church? You throw water on the fire, right? And I've seen people do that in the church, by

criticizing. People start to get excited in church or they start to move forward in God and listening to his leading and other people will get critical about that.

You have a picture of that in the Old Testament. Remember when King David came in from leading the ark of the covenant up to Jerusalem and he had striped himself down to his loincloth and he got himself all sweaty by dancing in the street and he walked into his house to greet his family because it was such an exciting day. He met his wife, Michal, who was Saul's daughter and she was just like her father. He comes in the door and sees her and she has a big bucket of ice water and throws it over him not literally but with her words. She said "How foolish you looked today out there on the streets. Is that any way for a king to behave." David replied "I will get even more undignified than this. Today I was dancing before the Lord, who has delivered his people."

He wouldn't take a backward step, he wouldn't allow Michal to douse the fire. But people do this sometimes, they will douse the fire with criticism. There's a very biblical place for discernment in the church. The bible says that we need to test every spirit and there are times when people may be doing things and it is not God's Spirit moving, but it's their flesh and it needs to be identified and the leadership of the church needs to note that and talk with people sometimes. We test the spirit.

Don't douse the fire, this is a scriptural command, don't douse the fire, do not put out the Spirit's fire.

Another way to put out a fire is to smother a fire, get a blanket, throw it over the flames. Or if you are like me and I am sure that there are some of you who have done this, you have a nice fire going and you put too many logs on it, too much wood and you smother the fire even with the fuel you are trying to put on it.

How can you smother the fire of the Spirit in the church? One way to do that is through sin. Sin will smother the fire. But another way is if we accept everything and anything as being from Him and we aren't discerning in any way. Some have unwittingly grieved the Holy Spirit by so wanting to have the fire of God that they have allowed anything and everything. In other words, they are so desperate for Isaac that they will accept Ishmael and that will be

fine. Things get so worked up and exciting but it's all human and God's not doing it but we're desperate for that. And that will smother the genuine work of God. That will grieve the Spirit when we don't do things correctly, when we don't wait for God.

Thirdly, there's another way you can quench a fire and that is you can neglect a fire. Don't neglect a fire. We can fail to feed and tend the fire of the Spirit in the church, when we settle for the status quo, when we don't press into God, when we don't surrender ourselves to him, when we don't read our bible, when we don't pray. Listen, Prayer feeds the fire! And church, it's up to all of us to tend the fire of the Holy Spirit and not to quench him.

Your highest calling in the world, your ultimate purpose is to be a worshiper. Remember though, Worship is not just singing. Whatever else God calls you to do, this is your ultimate purpose, it is to be a worshiper, with every word, with every song, with every thought, with every action, with every decision, it is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

Do you want to fulfill that calling in your life? To put God first, to love him and worship him? Focus is your superpower. Pay attention to this, growing as a worshiper, cultivate worship in your heart every single day and prepare yourself to come on Sundays as we're all gathered together. Be the one who sets the temperature around you, you're coming in to worship the Lord and let us grow in this greatest calling that we have. It's amazing how every other calling falls into place when you get the chief calling right. When God is everything.