

Jesus Gives You a Purpose for Living

Matthew 6:33

Good morning! Finally, we've reached the end of our series. Jesus Gives. I hope this series has given you hope and inspiration. Brandon and I have talked about what the Lord Jesus gives us as his followers. He gives us blessings, and there are so many of them, we have barely scratched the surface. For example, he gives us rest when we're stressed. Which is very important because of our current situation. He gives us a sense of security, he gives us a way out of temptations, he gives us mothers for our own good, he gives us second chances when we mess up, he gives us strength in hard times. We have one more to go. And today, we'll look at a topic that's so important for everyone. I'd like to share with you, **"Jesus Gives You a Purpose for Living"**.

People from all walks of life are looking for meaning and purpose. Most people have no idea why they are alive on planet Earth. What is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of living?

The poet Robert Frost is quoted as saying: **"In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life. It goes on."** That's all. It goes on. Inspiring, isn't it? Even King Solomon questioned whether life had any meaning. In the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes, he wrote this:

"'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.' . . . I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind." – Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14

This feeling must be shared by those who seek after things that in the end do not provide real meaning in life. Some people, in an attempt to find meaning in their lives seek fame, pleasure, power, possessions, achievements, service, and everything else that they feel could help them live a life of significance.

In the end, they find out that they all fall short. They are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

David Cassidy, a 70's teen idol and famous star of the popular TV series The Partridge Family, passed away a few years ago at the age of 67. After his death, ^{his} daughter Katie Cassidy, revealed the last words of ^{his} father. She said that on her father's final moments, he muttered the words, "So much wasted time". Cassidy was popular but underneath ^{that} were failed marriages and a drinking problem. He sought after things that didn't bring him lasting joy and significance.

But surely there is a purpose in life. There is a purpose in everything that we see around us. All our gadgets, appliances, vehicles, they all serve a purpose. The tiniest screw has a purpose. Everything invented has a purpose. What more about the things that God has created? The flowers, the water, the trees, the birds, the animals, the mountains, all of them serve a purpose. And since we are the pinnacle of God's creation, for certain there's a purpose why God created us.

So, the question is: Why am I alive?

It's not a new question. In fact, Jeremiah answered this question over 2,000 years ago. Look at Jeremiah, 20:18, "Why was I born? Was it only to have trouble and sorrow, to end my life in disgrace?" There have probably been times in your life when you have felt that way. Was I born just to have a bunch of problems? Was I put on this planet just to have heartache and grief and stress? Author Ashleigh Brilliant wrote "My life is a superb cast, but I can't figure out the plot." Jack Handley said, "I hope life isn't a joke because I don't get it." Dr. Hugh Moorehead is a philosophy professor at Northeastern Illinois University and a while back he wrote to 250 of the best-known philosophers and intellectuals of the day. And he asked them a simple question: "What is the meaning of life?" He then published their responses. Some offered guesses.

Some admitted that they made up a purpose. Others wrote him back and said, "Dr. Moorehead, if you have an answer to this, would you please let us know?" And some made very pessimistic responses. Isaac Asimov said this, "As far as I can see, there is no purpose." A life without purpose is not worth living, and it is no wonder that the suicide rate in our society has gone up even today. According to the CDC, in 2017 the number of suicides in this country is twice than the number of homicides. It seems like it safer outside the home than inside. In fact, statistics say that the suicide rate has gone up during this lockdown period.

How do you find significance in your life? Will you find it in things the world offers? What is your purpose for living? Jesus gives us the answer to these questions. We find that in a verse familiar to many of us. Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Jesus is saying, "First things first." In other words, he is saying that your purpose in life is to seek God not things of the world. The reason why many people face difficulties in life is because they have it in reverse. However, if they prioritize God, then much of their problems will go away.

Let me now unpack this verse to you so you have a better of understanding of this purpose for living that Jesus is giving us.

1. SET A PRIORITY: Seek First God's Kingdom.

"Seek first"

Jesus is the ruler of a new kingdom, and he calls His followers and those who would like to follow him to make pursuing His kingdom a priority. Jesus says to "seek first" the kingdom of God. The New Living Translation says, "make the kingdom of God your primary concern."

The word "first" is not simply a reference to time but importance. Jesus is not saying to seek the kingdom God first and then seek the things of this world.

He is saying that seeking the kingdom is our only objective. Theologian Gerhard Kittel says, “The sense of above all things is obvious in Matthew 6:33, for Jesus is not teaching that we should seek the kingdom first and then other things, but that there should be an exclusive orientation to the divine kingdom and righteousness.”

We do not pursue His kingdom as the first of several stops on a journey. This was the problem in Galatia where the apostle Paul rebuked the church for turning to legalistic practices to maintain their salvation after having trusted in Christ first for salvation. Jesus Christ is the King. So Christ alone is sufficient to equip us for His kingdom. It is only through Christ we have the promise from God to meet the needs that often cause us to worry. The Bible says, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave Him up for us all; how will He not also along with Him graciously give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32 NIV).

Jesus not only tells us that the kingdom is to be first but He tells us to “seek” it. It’s more than just having an awareness that God is first and greater than other things. Jesus commands us to seek His kingdom. Our seeking involves a choice. God does not force us to seek Him. The Bible says His spirit draws us (Jn. 6:44), but He does not force us. He loves us first, but He does not make us love Him. We cannot seek God just by accident. Seeking has to be a deliberate choice. You must have the heart that says, “Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, I want to see You.”

What’s interesting here is that the verb “seek” in Greek connotes a continuous action. You keep on seeking. It’s not after you’ve known God, you stop and then just go with the flow. No, you must actively and continuously seek God as long as you live. So, properly translated, that would be, “Keep on seeking God and his righteousness.”

Pursuing God is a mysterious task. God is invisible, inaudible, invincible, but He is “findable.” The Bible says to “seek the Lord while he may be found” (Isaiah 55:6). Col.3:1-3 says, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

We must set the priority—Seek first His Kingdom. Second,

2. SEE THE REALITY: Jesus Is King Over a Kingdom

Jesus said to “Seek first his kingdom.” Jesus taught a lot about the kingdom. I think you could prove it was the primary topic of His preaching and teaching. In the Gospel of Matthew alone the word “kingdom” is used 56 times in 54 different verses. When Jesus began His public ministry he went out preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17 NKJV).

Jesus declares the existence of a heavenly kingdom. He calls it the “Kingdom of Heaven” and the “Kingdom of God.” And He seems to use these phrases interchangeably, that is, the heavenly kingdom is the Kingdom of God. So where is the kingdom of God? Jesus preached that the kingdom of God was near, it was close by, it was immediately present. So can we see it? Can we go visit it? Where is this kingdom of God?

The kingdom is where the king rules and reigns, right? Why could Jesus say “the kingdom of heaven is at hand”? Because Jesus is the King, and where the King is, there is the kingdom. How do you get to be a part of this kingdom? By having Jesus as your king. It comes by a spiritual transformation. You have to be changed from the inside out. Jesus called it being born again. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3 NIV).

You enter into His kingdom by being born of God. John 1:12 tells us how, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” So being born again comes by receiving Jesus, by believing in Him. His instruction to seek first His kingdom reminds us that there is more to reality than what we can see, feel, hear, or taste. The prophet Isaiah warned of those who had eyes but could not see and ears but could not hear.

When His disciples asked Jesus why he taught in parables, He explained that truth about the kingdom is a secret that cannot be understood by those dominated by material things and calloused hearts (see Matt. 13).

When Paul prayed for the saints at Ephesus he prayed for God to open the eyes of their heart (Ephesians 1:18). Why? Because genuine faith is a spiritual reality that goes beyond what our physical eyes can see. It transcends our material existence. Jesus’ kingdom is different from other kingdoms. Jesus said to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.” (John 18:36).

We must set the priority—seek first his kingdom. Then, see the reality of the kingdom of God. Jesus is King. And third, we must

3. STRIVE FOR “HIS” PURITY:

“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness”. Now, we must recognize that the kingdom of God is not only powerful, but it is also pure, holy, and righteous. Notice Jesus is not suggesting to seek personal righteousness. Of course, he mentions in other passages that we must certainly aspire for personal purity, but Matthew 6:33 calls us to seek “His righteousness.” The emphasis is not on getting yourself cleaned up before seeking God; rather Jesus is saying that God is righteous. We don’t get God by being righteous, we get righteous by knowing God.

You see, the bad news is that true and perfect righteousness is not possible for man to attain on his own; the standard is simply too high. The good news is that true righteousness is possible for mankind, but only through the cleansing of sin by Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We have no ability to achieve righteousness in and of ourselves. But Christians possess the righteousness of Christ, because “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is an amazing truth. On the cross, Jesus exchanged our sin for His perfect righteousness so that we can one day stand before God and He will see not our sin, but the holy righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

This means that we are made righteous in the sight of God; that is, that we are accepted as righteous and treated as righteous by God on account of what the Lord Jesus has done. He was made sin; we are made righteousness. On the cross, Jesus was treated as if He were a sinner, though He was perfectly holy and pure, and we are treated as if we were righteous, though we are defiled and depraved. On account of what the Lord Jesus has endured on our behalf, we are treated as if we had entirely fulfilled the Law of God and had never become exposed to its penalty. We have received this precious gift of righteousness from the God of all mercy and grace.

Which leads us to fourth point. In order to receive this righteousness of God, we must

4. SUBMIT TO HIS AUTHORITY:

That is implicit if you are going to seek God. The Scripture is clear that our pursuit is not for just any kingdom; we seek God’s kingdom. We are called to pursue and submit to the reign and rule of almighty God. Perhaps, one reason God seems distant and the worries of life seem dominant is our reluctance to submit to

His authority. The Bible says “God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.” (1 Pet. 5:5-6).

Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, but He is also the reigning King of Kings. William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was asked about the secret of his success and the impact that the Salvation Army was having upon the world. Booth paused and spoke with tearful eyes, “I will tell you the secret. God has all of me there is of me. There have been men with better brains, greater talents, and greater opportunities. But, from the day I got a vision for what Jesus could do with the poor of London, I made up my mind that God would have all of William Booth there was.” (Frank Cox, Take Your Burdens To the Lord, pastorlife.org) General Booth knew the Salvation Army had only one commander and chief whose rank and power surpasses all of our futile attempts to govern our own lives. WE must understand this: God is not interested in building your kingdom, but He is extremely committed to meeting your needs that empower you to build His kingdom.

Now, in order to submit to his authority, naturally you need to have faith in God. You need to acknowledge that he exists and that you’re ready to hand over the reins of your life to him. And when you do that, there is a reward waiting for you. Hebrews 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Which leads us to our last point,

5. Satisfy yourself with his bounty.

“And all these things will be given to you as well.”

Folks, when you seek God and his kingdom, you receive a reward from God. Well, I know sometimes we say, God is my reward. That is certainly biblical. But it is also biblical to expect a reward from God. Nothing wrong with that. It says

right there in that verse we just read. And the verse prior to that. What kind of reward? Both material and spiritual.

If you read the verses following verse 6 of Hebrews 11, you'll see a list of men and women of God who put their faith in God and as a result received God's blessings. Like Abraham who obeyed God and went to a land where he was a stranger and there God made him prosperous – he had plenty of livestock and servants and everything. And you see others who were blessed by God in terms of them being able to conquer armies and overcame hardships and persecutions, etc.

What he did for his people in the past, God can do it for you today. He is able to bless you as well, both materially and spiritually if you would just seek him with all your heart. He is near to you and is eager to respond to your needs if you just seek him earnestly. Jer. 29:13 says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

Friend, God is faithful and gracious and he longs to meet your need. And you know what, the best reward you can ever receive from God is the gift of salvation. Salvation is being delivered from sin and death. You see, many people can't really see their purpose for living because of sin in their lives. Sin has clouded their judgment and even deadened their conscience. Sin has caused them to be confused about life and as a result they wander aimlessly in life, not knowing what they are supposed to do in life.

The Bible says that we are all sinners. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". In fact, no one of us is righteous although we may think we are because we go to church, we don't steal, we don't lie, we honor our parents. But let me ask you, are you able to keep all of the 10 commandments? If you're like me, you aren't able. And the Bible says, if you've broken one commandment, you've broken all of them. Because God demands perfection and sinlessness. But no one is perfect. How can we get out of this situation?

You can't unless you turn your life over to Jesus, the sinless one. The Bible says "There is only one mediator between man and God, the man Christ Jesus". As a man, Jesus gave his life, he allowed himself to be crucified for your sins. He did this because he loves you. He willingly died on the cross for you. He wants you to be saved from your sins. What do you need to do?

Just believe in what Jesus has done for you. Believe he died on the cross, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day. What is your reward when you receive Jesus? Eternal life in heaven and abundant life on earth. It doesn't mean you'll be prosperous materially, although that's possible. It means you'll experience his grace and peace even when hard times come. He'll be with you in your journey in life.

Friend, Jesus wants you to realize that your purpose in life is to seek God and his righteousness. So, if you're not yet a Christian, that is your purpose in life, to seek God. And after you've become a Christian, that is still your purpose in life. To seek God. It is never-ending. We are called by Jesus to keep on seeking God. That's the whole purpose of life.