

“Can’t Miss a Sunday: Purpose Finder”

Philippians 2:12-18 (NIV)

June 10, 2018

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Ever felt like you had no purpose? Ever felt ‘shipwrecked?’ Stranded, searching, struggling.

Today concludes the series we have been doing on “Can’t Miss a Sunday.” Today “Purpose Finder.” However, with this wonderful shipwrecked and beach scene ready for Vacation Bible School tomorrow I thought I should maybe change the sermon in stead of Purpose Finder to “Porpoise Finder.”

Vacation Bible School tomorrow...150 volunteers---no 150 missionaries will be home based tomorrow as they share the Good News of Jesus with over 540 children. Thanks to our children team of Robin McFerrin, Nan Robins and Leah Wheeley. The master mind of building this set and decorations, I’ve been told has been Nan Robins, Assistant Children’s Director. So, to blend in this week and next week decided to ‘fit it’ with the scenery.’

The children that arrive tomorrow are going to find that even during times of being shipwrecked--Jesus Rescues.

There was a man who had been shipwrecked and stranded on a desert island for many, many years. One day, while strolling along the beach, he spotted a ship in the distance. This had never happened in all the time he was on the island, so he was very excited about the chance of being rescued.

Immediately, he built a fire on the beach and generated as much smoke as possible. It worked! Soon, the ship was heading his way. When the ship was close enough to the island, a dinghy was dispatched to investigate the situation. The man on the island was overjoyed with the chance to be rescued and met his rescuers as they landed.

After some preliminary conversation the man in charge asked the man on the island how he had survived for so many years.

The man replied by telling of his exploits for food and how he was able to make a fine house to live in. In fact, the man said, "You can see my home from here. It's up there on the ridge." He pointed the men in the direction of his home. They looked up and saw three buildings. They inquired about the building next to the man's house and he replied, "That's my church - I go there to worship on Sundays."

When asked about the third building, the man replied, "That's where I used to go to church."

He couldn’t even please himself. Oh friends, stay and help make the church be purpose driven. This is not a perfect church and never will be. Your clergy and staff, your leaders are human. Our goal is to strive to give our best to God in the midst of our humanity. We come here to this church as a “Power Place,” “Community Center,” and “Worship Zone,” and as a place we can find purpose.

Rick Warren wrote the “Purpose Driven Life” back in 2002. It has sold over 30 million copies. I like man of you have read his book. Why before even the first page he writes, “What on earth am I here for?” That question has been well before Warren wrote the book. What ARE you here for? What is your purpose?

If we were searching for oil...I would have to drill for it.

Back in the day if I were searching for gold I would have to “pan for it.” Thar’s gold in them thar hills!

If I was trying to find a water source I could have perhaps used a ‘diving rod.’ A forked y-shaped branch that supposedly would tilt and shake when a water source was found.

If I wanted to find what direction I was going I would use a compass---or today I just use my cell phone to find a place for an oil change, gold at a jewelry store, and a place to get a drink...of water.

But where do we go to find our purpose in life? The Bible is our source.

Philippians 2: 13, “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”

Who’s good purpose? (HIS) It is not all about us. If we are totally committed to being a Christ follower then we want God to work in us for fulfill HIS good pleasure.

The New Living Translation of this verse puts it this way, “God is working in you giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.”

Do you have the desire that your purpose in life is to please Him? Do you claim that power to actually DO what pleases Him?

Chariots of Fire was a 4-time Academy Award winner in 1981. Actually, won best picture. It is based on the true story of runner Eric Liddell. One of Sarah’s favorite quotes, and actually a most famous quote of that movie is this: Liddell says, “I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure.”

Do you feel His pleasure when you do His purpose? Have you found your purpose? Have you found God’s pleasure?

Verse 13 says to “fulfill His good purpose and the power to do what pleases HIM.”

Maybe His purpose is this: ¹⁴**Do everything without grumbling or arguing,** Oh may what a day that would be. What a church that would be! Do everything without grumbling or arguing. I wish someone would ask my “Why?” xxxx

¹⁵**so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky**

Anyone here blameless and pure? Oh, we got to keep working at our purpose. Oh, to be children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Hold it---was that written yesterday? No, we have dealt with a warped and crooked generation for many a century. Sometimes methinks it's getting more warped and crooked.

There has always been a calling, a purpose for us to live a life different than the world. Paul, who wrote Philippians wrote this in the previous chapter in Philippians 1 (verse 27): Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (NIV)

Is our purpose then to live a life worthy of the good news of Jesus Christ? And if you do live your life that way the world will take notice: **Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.** You will shine as lights in the world.

Rev. Cathy, myself, Sarah and our 2 wonderful lay delegates, Gary and Susan Brelsford just came back our Florida United Methodist Annual Conference yesterday. Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson was preaching and she said, "We all know people who read the Bible and pray every day and still act like jerks. Gives us a bad name." Beloved we must do more than just go through the motions. It is not a ritual. It is not a religion. But a relationship with Jesus Christ where we desire to be more and more like Him.

How do we shine as lights in the world? How do we shine among them like stars in the sky?

Verse 16:¹⁶ **as you hold firmly to the word of life.**

The word of life---yes, the Bible...hold on to it.

I see signs sometimes outside a church that says, "Bible based church." Now that puzzles me. What other kind of church is there?" Inherent with the name church should be that it is Bible based.

Hold on to these words of life. Find your purpose---be Biblical.

Perhaps purpose is what Jesus really meant when

Mark 12:28-34 New International Version (NIV)

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came...and he asked him (Jesus), "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

²⁹ "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

PHUMC's purpose statement---I mean vision statement---is: All Ages! All In! Loving God! Loving All! Is that not our purpose!!!!

Everyone here...from the youngest to the most senior has a purpose. I pray that Church can be a purpose finder for you.

Let me honestly say that there have been times when I've felt shipwrecked and with all the feelings that comes there is sometimes a sense of helplessness, that can turn into hopelessness. There is a lack of direction and a lack of purpose.

Why am I even here? It is especially at these times that we need to hold on firmly to the word of life.

It is at these times that you need to abide in Christ and have Christ abide in you.

Some years ago, I was out of town on Mother's Day Sunday and had the Assistant Pastor preach. This is a man I would trust with my life. However, when I came back in town I was asked if I had heard what he had said during the Mother's Day sermons. Now know that in Churchland, besides Christmas and Easter---Mother's Day is often the next highest attended Sunday. I hadn't heard what he said so I quickly heard that he had said in that Mother's Day Sermon that children are useless.

Great!!! Way to win the mothers over on that point! I asked him about it and he said, "Dave think about it---they cry, they wet themselves, they can't feed themselves, they don't talk, they certainly don't work---they for all practical purposes are useless."

And then he said---Except---to be loved. As useless as a baby or a child is they are there to be loved---that is their purpose.

Rick Warren, who wrote the Purpose Driven Life book had a devotion he wrote in April of this year. He quoted this scripture:

Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure" (Ephesians 1:4-5 NLT).

And then Rick Warren closed his devotion with this: "Let this sink in: Your first purpose is not to *do anything* but to just *be loved* by God."

And therefore, I close my sermon with this: Your first purpose is not to do anything but to just be loved by God.