**Calvary Fellowship 12.4.2022 Matthew 20:1-34 “Living Your Life on Purpose”**

* **So if U aren’t aware, I have 3 kids, Mia is 15, Xander is 13, & Livi is 10**
* My son has been thinking through his career choices & over the last year he told me he’s narrowed it down to being either a Pastor or a YouTuber
* But about 3 years ago, he decided that he not only wants to be a pastor, but his plan is to be the pastor of Calvary when I retire (should that ever happen)
* I plan on teaching until I’m dead - preferably I’d like to die while preaching
* That would be terrible for U, but great for me b/c I go & then I see Jesus & I say, “Lord, I was just talking about U.”
* But this idea of being the Senior Pastor of Calvary is something he’s put some thought into b/c he’s already hiring the people he wants to work with
* So he sat his best friend Danny down (Pastor’s Alex’s son) & said, “Listen, I’m going to be the pastor of Calvary when my dad retires, so why don’t U be an assistant pastor here & we can work together
* Well, based on the details I received from Danny’s mom who told me this story, Danny accepted the job & told her that he is going to be a pastor as well
* She said, “Well Danny, if that’s what U feel called to do, then U can go to Bible College & get a theology degree & get prepared.”
* Danny says, “Mom, that’s a waste of time. Xander already hired me, so I already have the job.” - listen, parenting is no joke
* But I’ve always take Xander w/ me when I do a wedding or visit someone in the hospital - Xander would say, “You’re the Senior Pastor & I’m the Junior Pastor.”
* **But we all do this - we’re trying to figure out our place in the world & how to do what God has called us to do & step into our purpose for life**
* I tell U this b/c we’re about to walk into the 2nd half of a conversation that Jesus is having w/ His disciples
* If U remember from the last time we were together (if not, then this is your “previously on church”), Jesus met a rich, young, ruler
* This young man asked Jesus how to inherit eternal life & Jesus eventually told him to sell his stuff & give it to the poor & follow Him
* The young man was possessed by his possessions & couldn’t do it
* Then Jesus said that it’s hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God for this very reason - b/c their many possessions have a tight grip on them
* The disciples believed what most people int ate 1st century Jewish culture believed, that wealth was a sign that U were loved by God
* So they said, “If that’s the case, the who can be saved?”
* Jesus said that w/ God all thing are possible, & then the disciples say, “Lord, we’ve given up everything to follow U.”
* And Jesus acknowledges that & tells them that there’s eternal reward for them
* But then He says something really important that we can’t skip over
* “But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (Matthew 19:30 NKJV)
* And Jesus is going to explain this principle by giving us a parable that expounds on this to help us really get it
* So if you’re here today & you’re struggling w/ your purpose, God has a word for U today - if you’re struggling at your work, God wants to speak to U today
* If you’ve climbed the ladder of success & it wasn’t as fulfilling as U hoped it would be, then I’m really glad you’re here b/c God has something for U today…

**———(v. 1-7)———**

**#1 - I Need to Understand God’s Generosity**

* **This illustration helps us understand what Jesus means when He says, “The last shall be 1st & the 1st shall be last”**
* Jesus is saying that in God’s economy, things are different than they are humanly speaking b/c we’d agree that this isn’t how things work
* I can assure U that no union meeting has ever opened w/ the reading of this text - why? B/c unions are based on time of service & seniority
* This story throws all of that out to window to show that God is gracious beyond what we could imagine
* Let me explain the story - the 1st group gets started at the 1st hour, in the Jewish culture, that’s 6AM - the workday was from 6AM to 6PM
* This group according to verse 1, He agreed w/ the laborers to pay then a denarius a day - this was fair wage & was customary in that time (pic)
* But they negotiated their price & this is important as we understand the others
* Then we learn that the landowner goes out at 9AM & finds more workers & says, “Whatever is right, I’ll pay U” - there’s no negotiation
* He does the same at the 6th hour (noon) & the 9th hour (3PM)
* Then finally, he goes out at the 11th hour (5PM) & finds the last group & tells them to start working & he’ll give them what’s right

**———(v. 8-16)———**

* **Notice what happens - the landowner starts giving out the wages from last to first & gives everyone the same amount**
* The guys who were out working all day are upset & the landowner says, “Isn’t this what we agreed one? Aren’t I paying U exactly what U asked for?”
* And this is the issue that Jesus is bringing up - if U trust the grace of God, it will work out a lot better for U than seeking to demand from God what U think you’ve earned - b/c no 1 earns heaven or God’s favor through work
* “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV)
* If the thought ended there, we might think there was benefit to being lazy
* But Paul gives us 1 more sentence to show us that we have been saved by Jesus for a purpose
* "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10 NKJV)
* That word “Workmanship” = (Gr.) poima – poem = work of art – You’re a work of art - U might say, “I believe that b/c my husband is piece of work”
* That might be true,but you’re a work of art - NLT says you’re God’s masterpiece
* The Bible likens God to a potter & us to the clay - God is molding & shaping U into a work of art that reflects who He is
* **And why is this important? B/c when we think about our purpose in life, it always begins w/ God b/c U were created by Him & for Him**
* This is why so many people are struggling as they try to why they’re here on this planet - they think it’s about figuring out what they want - it’s not
* If you’re a Christian, your job is to figure out how God has shaped U & how to use those gifts He’s given U to the glory of God
* And it doesn’t matter what those gifts are - U use whatever god has given U & it will result in purpose, meaning, & unspeakable joy into your life
* **So on a Sunday about 2 years ago I make a mistake - I had 6 shots of espresso that day - I typically limit myself to 4, but I miscalculated & at midnight I was still awake**
* I took some melatonin & that didn’t work, so at 1:30AM I took some Benadryl & that knocked me out - even though I was dragging in the morning
* Well, on Monday night I was determined to get a good night’s sleep, so I took some melatonin & I was asleep by 11:30PM
* At 1:30AM I wake up & my wife is standing over me & she says, “I woke up & I decided to do a sweep of the house & there are 2 mice in Xander’s room.”
* Now I’m wide awake - so I get up & we walk over to Xander’s room
* Xander slept in the family room that night b/c we were up watching Doctor Who
* She says, “The 2 mice are on Xander’s top windowsill.” - so we walk in & I see the silhouette of the 2 mice & I say, “Those are 2 mice, but they’re outside.”
* She says, “No way. They are inside this house.” - so I get on the step stool & I grab Xander’s guitar stand & I start hanging on the windowsill & they scurry into the night b/c they were, in fact, outside
* So Carey is calm & she says, “I’m so sorry to wake U. I know U have such a hard time falling asleep.” - we’re having a nice moment
* When all of a sudden, my 13-year old daughter Mia busts open her door w/ a fire extinguisher ready to crack skulls
* I say, “What are U doing?” - she says, “I heard something, so I came out to investigate. But don’t worry. I’ve been recording everything on my phone.”
* I said, “So your plan was to beat the intruders w/ fire extinguishers & then use the recording against them when cops show up? Am I on an episode of Law & Order?” - She says, “That was my plan.” - I said, “OK. It’s a decent plan.”
* Here’s the point - she was using whatever she had available to do good - even though I don’t know how she pulled a fire extinguisher from her bedroom
* Listen, God saved U for a purpose - God created U for a purpose - our job is not to create our purpose, but to discover our purpose & then live out our purpose - that’s where you’ll have the most joy & impact in your life

**———(v. 17-28)———**

**#2 - I Need to Trust God’s Plan**

* There’s a couple of things U need to know to really understand what’s happening here b/c there’s some things being spoken that U really only understand by understanding the Jewish culture
* **#1 - sit @ right hand & left hand - what’s that mean?**
* Remember, Jesus & His disciples are headed to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover - Her stops them on the side of the road to tell them that He’s going be betrayed, arrested, crucified, & resurrected 3 days later
* But the right & left hand were places of authority usually at the Passover meal
* They were asking to become vice-president & speaker of the house
* Interestingly, at the last supper (or the final Passover meal), John does sit at his right hand - the place of a trusted friend - It’s where we get our phrase “right hand man” from
* And who ended up on the left, which was the place of honor? Judas Iscariot
* **#2 - Can U drink the cup?** They say yes having no idea what they’re getting themselves into - At every Jewish wedding there are 2 cups the couple drink
* **Cup #1 was the cup of joy** - they both drank the cup & it served to remind them that when life’s joys are shared, they are doubled
* **Cup #2 was the cup of sacrifice** - It was to remind the couple that if they met life’s difficulties together, their difficulties would be cut in 1/2
* So Jesus asks, “Can U drink the cup I’m going to drink?”
* Which cup are we talking about? His previous conversation shows which - it’s the cup of sacrifice, the 2nd cup
* But these guys couldn’t see it b/c all they could think about was being in charge & being great by ruling - but it’s not where greatness comes from
* Greatness is about adding value to others & here’s how U know that’s true
* B/c the best moments of your life are usually not moments when someone is doing something for U - it’s the moments U were serving someone else
* **So a couple of years ago, my wife threw out her back & I was cooking for the whole week - we have this menu board in our kitchen**
* I told the kids, “Write down whatever U want to eat & I’ll make it.”
* Now typically, I would be grilling meat b/c that’s my wheelhouse - My grilling game is worthy of an instagram account just for the stuff I’m producing
* But we’ve been watching this cooking show as a family, so I decided to cook pasta - so I boiled the water, threw the pasta in - heated the sauce
* Then I tested the pasta & it was good to go - so I poured it out in a colander
* My wife got up to get some pasta & as she went to scoop some up, 90% of the pasta came up - have U ever seen a mop? Part of it is tight & unmoving
* And the other part is wiggly - well, that was my pasta & to make matters worse, my whole family was laughing at me - so I had to fix it
* I grabbed the part that was clumpy & I cut it w/ a pair of scissors
* Problem solved - the other problem is, I made my son Mac & cheese & the cheese didn’t mix in evenly - it stayed in clumps
* So I told him, “Xander, U know what’s better than Mac & cheese? Bonus Mac & cheese. That’s what U have b/c every few bites, you’re getting an explosion of cheese w/ these cheese balls that are the size of a peanut M&M.”
* Then I had to make grilled cheese for lunch 2 days later & I was making a bunch of them, so I had an assembly line I created for the buttering, cheesing, & grilling of these grilled cheeses
* My daughter Mia says, “Dad, there’s a problem w/ my grilled cheese.”
* I say, “Mia, just be grateful you’re eating dinner. Don’t complain.”
* She says, “Dad, I have a problem w/ this grilled cheese.”
* I said, “I know. It’s not exactly like your mom’s superhuman grilled cheeses.”
* She says, “Dad, I’m serious. Just look at it.” - I look & the bread is grilled to perfection & I say, “Mia, what’s wrong w/ it?” (here’s the picture)
* Mia says, “The problem is, there’s no cheese inside. It’s just grilled bread.”
* So yeah that’s a slight problem - thankfully my wife & kids laughed me to scorn
* But my wife’s favorite thing was that we moved the entire dining room into the bedroom every night so we could all eat together & she didn’t have to eat in bed alone
* **Listen, here’s 1 of the secrets to living w/ unspeakable joy - serve others**
* If U haven’t figured it out yet, focusing on yourself isn’t a recipe for being happy
* Instead, look around at the selfish people in your life - are they happy?
* No - they’re miserable b/c selfishness doesn’t bring life
* **Here’s what U have to understand for the story in all its’ depth:**
* Jesus & the disciples are going towards Jerusalem as its’ approaching Passover time - they’re getting to the city of Jericho
* Jericho was the city where Herod the Great had his winter palace
* This was a magnificent structure that had indoor pools & gardens
* **But it’s the place where much of Herod’s treachery took place**
* The most famous was when Herod invited Aristobulus, the high priest, to his palace for a swim - once he in the water, Herod had him drowned
* Why? B/c he was too popular for Herod’s liking
* It’s w/ this backdrop that Jesus teaches them what greatness really is
* B/c in that day, U became ‘great’ for 1 of 2 reasons
* U were either a great warrior like Alexander or a builder like Herod
* Herod was 4.5 feet tall, so he went the route of a builder
* But Jesus explains the 2 ways U & I can pursue greatness
* **The path to greatness falls into 1 of 2 categories - service or ‘serve us’**
* Jesus understood that the “serve us” life doesn’t lead to purpose, wholeness, or joy - It leads to frustration & emptiness
* That’s why Jesus calls us to model the identity he laid out for us
* It’s why God took on human form in the person of Jesus - To die for us, but also to model what the best possible way to live looks like
* That’s why He does 1 last thing before entering Jerusalem…

**———(v. 29-34)———**

**#3 - I Need to Embrace God’s Vision**

* **A little bit of background - blindness was common in the ancient world for many reasons - some were born blind, other got infection that led to blindness - others got it wounds in battle or accidents that happened**
* The city of Jericho had plant that some used to create a balm was said to cure blindness - we have no idea if this actually worked
* But that’s why it wasn’t uncommon to see a lot blind people living in Jericho & begging at the city gate b/c they couldn’t work
* Now, Mark & Luke both record this story, but they name 1 of the blind men
* “Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging.” (Mark 10:46 NIV)
* **I love what Jesus does - He says, “What do U want Me to do for U?”**
* This isn’t Jesus being coy - this is Jesus asking them to be specific
* They say, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened”
* There’s something powerful here about praying w/ specificity - that is, really asking God specifically what U want Him to do
* B/c sometimes we pray the vaguest prayers & then we wonder why it’s not working - truth is, some prayers are so vague it’s impossible to know if it is
* “Lord, bless all of us” - what does that even mean?
* Instead, if U really want to be blown away - pray specific prayers & write them down - watch what happens?
* When U pray specifically, God starts answering specifically
* **So Xander & I went to a concert a couple of weeks ago to see my favorite band & I have this prayer that regularly pray - “Lord, surprise us”**
* It’s prayer that I pray for God to show us He loves us in some special way
* Now, this concert was totally sold out & there was no way to get tickets, but someone from Calvary got me the tickets for my birthday - amazing!
* So we’re watching the show & we’re sitting on the end of a row & people are filling in & out & halfway through the show, this couple turns to me & says, “We’re so sorry we’ve been coming in & out. - I say, “Don’t worry about it”
* They say, “We work w/ the band & we thought your son might like this custom guitar pick from the band” - they had no idea that my son played guitar
* They had no idea that my son loves this band
* Now, a guitar pick costs 25 cents - this custom guitar pick that they only made for this 1 show - that costs $75 on Ebay
* **Here’s my point - when U pray specifically, God answers specifically**
* Now, here’s the flip side of that - sometimes we pray for something & God loves us too much to answer that prayer that way
* “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.” (Romans 8:26 NIV)
* I like to call “The Prayer Remix” - that means that when U pray, Jesus is relaying that prayer in a different way to the Father
* “And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.” (Romans 8:27 NIV)
* U & I are trying to figure out God’s will - Jesus knows what it is & when we ask for something that isn’t God’s will, He remixes the prayer
* **There’s stuff you’re asking God for, that Jesus is modifying mid-stream**
* “Oh God I need $” - Jesus reinterprets, “Father, he says he wants a job”
* “Oh God I want to marry her” - Jesus reinterprets, “No he doesn’t. In fact, He wants that girl to move far away from him.”
* I dated a girl that dumped me & I prayed I could get her back - It didn’t happen
* I saw her 4 years later - Jesus, thank U for reinterpreting my prayer!
* **Listen, God wants to answer your prayer - in fact, He promises to answer if we pray according to God’s will**
* And it wouldn’t be very loving of our heavenly Father if He gave us something less than what we need b/c we weren’t wise enough to ask for what was best
* Listen, God isn’t holding out on U - He’s looking out for U & drawing U closer
* **Here’s the point - these men prayed for vision & the 1st thing they saw was Jesus - there’s something to that**
* U pray for God’s vision, for God’s purpose, for God’s will in your life - you’re going see Jesus & He’s going lead & direct your life
* **But know this - everything God creates, He creates w/ purpose & U are no exception - your primary purpose in life is to know God**
* And if you’re looking for purpose apart from God, you’re asking for a very hard life - instead, Jesus died for U to prove how much He loves U
* He died for U so we could experience forgiveness & then step into the purpose that He has for us - b/c the worst thing that could happen to U is to get the end of the your life & realize U wasted it
* Instead, embrace the 1 who created U - give Him your life & what He’ll give U in return is a better life & a more meaningful life than U could have ever come up w/ on your own
* **But it’s up to U - U have to decide to follow Him & lay your plans down at His feet & say, “God, here’s my mess. Can U do something w/ it?”**
* And He takes the mess & turns it into your message
* B/c once U figure out who created U & that U are created to know Him & experience His love in your love, knowing what to do gets a lot easier
* B/c U don’t have to figure it all out anymore
* Instead, He wants to walk w/ U - lead U, d direct U, & bring some people in your life to encourage U when things get tough
* So that when U get to the end of your life, U didn’t waste it
* Instead, U squeezed all of the juice out of your life & it mattered - b/c U were connected to the 1 who your life mattered most to…