

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: New Years Eve

TITLE: Purpose is Found in Christ

SCRIPTURE: Luke 5:1-11 // John 21:1-6

DATE: 12.31.17

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It is, again, the time of year when we begin a process of self-evaluation, reflection, and self-improvement. In a strange and yet somehow unified surge the nation seems to orient themselves around setting goals and putting forth effort to accomplish those goals as we turn the corner from 2017 to 2018. So, we find ourselves making New Year's resolutions, which if we're honest can be fun and inspiring. We compete with friends and strangers, set goals (some public, others not so much), and strive to get "better". All this is well and good, but there is something beneath the surface of it all that may not be. Somewhere there is perhaps a sense of failure fueling us to obtain success this year. Maybe that failure results in fear or shame, but often our drive to get "better" is a cycle of not just trying to improve, but find worth and value in what we can produce.

We begin to compartmentalize our lives into specific categories and think specifically of all the things that deserve our attention, but if we're honest, at some point we have a sobering thought, "*God, what am I supposed to do?*" In a moment of clarity, we break out of our cycle of self-improvement and focus our hearts onto the one who can actually change us, but we draw a blank on what that looks like and so we begin to ask a question of purpose.

This is actually terrifying though, right?

Today's passages, though in different Gospels are the beginning and the ending of the same story – bookends of the journey of the disciple Peter. Most of us are familiar with Peter, at least on some level. I love the guy so much because he always seems to be getting into trouble, saying whatever comes to his mind without ever constructing it in his thoughts beforehand. You kind of get this vibe in the Gospels that Jesus loved Peter's boldness, but needed a little extra patience with his bluntness, don't you?

But Peter didn't always follow Jesus. It had to start somewhere and today we're going to look at the beginning.

PASSAGE: Luke 5:1-11

Jesus is walking along the shore and sees Peter's boat floating by the docks, empty, as Peter is washing out his nets. So, Jesus walks down and without any semblance of permission, steps into Peter's boat and then has the audacity to ask the stranger for a ride.

I'm not exactly sure what Peter is thinking in this moment, but it's got to be something along the lines of, "Who does this guy think he is?" But, for whatever reason, Peter does it and Jesus sets out from the shore a little way and begins to teach the crowd that was following him while they stand on the shore. At the end of the sermon Jesus turns to Peter and again, has the audacity to ask him for something that he has no business asking. He actually begins to give Peter fishing lessons. This is so humorous, because out of the two of them it's Peter, not Jesus, who is the expert. I mean have you ever been coached on something by someone who virtually knows nothing about it? It's frustrating! But Peter again, (and who knows why) does what Jesus asks of him and tosses his nets overboard resulting in the biggest haul of fish he has ever experienced. So heavy, in fact, was the catch that the nets began to snap and once they got the fish in the boats, they began to sink. In astonishment at what just happened, Peter recognizes there is something divine about this man standing in his boat and so he worships him.

APPLICATION

1. Jesus approaches us where we are at (in our world).

Look at what Jesus did. He went down to the docks and rubbed shoulders with some fishermen. He got *in* the boat. He didn't go to the temple and set up shop, waiting on anyone and everyone who might be interested. No, no, no. He literally immersed himself into the world of those he was trying to reach. In fact, he is the master of this.

You know one of the things we're guilty of? Trying to reach people in the name of Jesus without having any context or clue of what their world is like. Do you know why so many people who should be unified simply aren't? It's because we have perception, but not perspective. We lack empathy.

Isn't that so amazing about Jesus though? Literally, divine put on skin and bone and became man. Why? So that he could look like us? No. So that he can experience what our life is like. In fact, the Scriptures say that he is able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses because he himself went through what we go through. Isn't that encouraging. You know, sometimes it's easy to think God is distant or absent or that he just doesn't care. Nothing could be further from the truth. God stepped into your world so that he could bring you into his.

2. Jesus points to our future not our failures.

Now this one takes just a little understanding of Jewish culture at this time and place. The study of the Scriptures was not only common, but revered at this time. As a little Jewish boy, you began your training at the age of five or six and you began to study the Torah and memorize scripture. You didn't have your own copy to take home, either, so you memorized it by reciting it out loud and you did this for year until the age of 13 or so when you also took up a vocation (typically whatever your family does). But here's why this is so important. The best and brightest students continued their studies simultaneously while they worked, but nowhere in the Gospels do we get the impression that any of the disciples are doing that. In fact, we actually get the impression that they were uneducated men. Which means that they were flunkies and failures. They didn't make the cut. I wonder how many times Peter sat in that boat on the waves as he looked to the horizon and thought, "God what do I do?"

But look at Jesus. He never once points backwards, only forwards. I believe Jesus gives us hope for tomorrow much more than he focuses on the failures of our past.

PASSAGE: JOHN 21:1-6

Well if you remember, I said this was the beginning and ending of Peter's journey with Jesus so let's look at the ending which is found in John 21.

We get a glimpse here of Peter once he believes Jesus is dead. Where do we find him? Fishing. Once Peter was convinced that Jesus wasn't who he thought he was he returned to his old ways of living. I wonder how many of us are guilty of that exact thing.

Jesus (unrecognized by the disciples) walks up to the shore and sees Peter and a few other disciples fishing after a long night of catching nothing. From the shore, he asks them to toss the net in again (sound familiar?). They do and when the nets begin to fill and Peter realizes it's Jesus. He jumps in the water and swims to shore in his excitement.

3. Jesus calls us back when we get off track.

Circumstances in life don't change what God has called you into. Your purpose is not cancelled, just because it looks different than you once thought. Jesus, graciously deals with Peter and graciously deals with us. In fact, he has a conversation with Peter immediately following this reminding him what his purpose in life is.

For Discussion ...

1. Have you asked God what your purpose is? Why or why not?
2. Have you gotten off track or returned to old ways of living?
3. What do you think is the hardest part about stepping into our purpose?
4. Have you discovered the life Jesus offers to be better than one you could create on your own?
5. If you sense Jesus is calling you into something, will you respond to him?