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Sid Sybenga

Created to be like Jesus* Romans 8:28-29 and Colossians 3

Today we reach the mid point of lent –

the mid point of our spiritual growth campaign
called the 40 days of Purpose.

So far we have discovered that knowing our purpose,
or discovering my purpose is one of the most important
things that can happen in my life.

Without purpose our lives are tiresome,
unfulfilled, confusing, and uncontrollable.

But when we know our purpose, and
live on purpose we are filled with energy,
joy and meaning, and vision and hope that's out of this world.

So what is our purpose in life?

What on earth am I here for?

That's the question we have been trying to answer
these last few weeks.

The bible - God through his revelation –
tells us that he created us for his pleasure.

He made us so that God could love us.

We were created to worship.

Secondly, God made us to be part of his family.

He wired us so that we need desperately to belong.

God adopted us as his children.

He made us for fellowship.

If we do not worship or we are not in fellowship
our lives are diminished, and we feel dissatisfied.

We feel that somehow we are missing the mark,
- that life is passing us by.

Today we consider the third purpose for living.

We were made to be and to become like Jesus.

We were made for sanctification
as the old theologians used to say.

Look at Romans 8:29

From the very beginning, even before he made the world
God's intention was to make us in his image -
to be like God.

And the person who is the perfect image of God is Jesus.

He is the human being God hoped would live on earth.

And so Paul says in Rm 8:29.

God chose us,
God planned for us to be conformed to the likeness
of his son, Jesus.
We were made to be his brothers and sisters.
To look like him.
That is why God called us and saved us.
That was his hope for us.
God wants us to be holy – to be godly.
To think the way he thinks, to act the way he acts,
to feel the way he feels, and to value the things he values.
The reason he saved you and
fills you with his spirit is
God wants to make you like himself.
To be like Jesus the perfect image of God.

Now, as Rick Warren points out in his book,
this does not happen over night and
it doesn't happen by magic or by itself.
It's a process of growing up - of maturing.
It's a life long process of becoming holy,
that is what the word sanctification means.
It's a process of discipleship.
A process of being shaped into the pattern of Jesus.
That's our third purpose.

And this growing up, says Rick Warren,
does not happen by imitation but by habitation.
Christ likeness is the fruit of the Spirit.
Growth happens when the spirit of Jesus lives in us.
Patience, the ability to forgive, humility, trust
sacrificial giving doesn't come
by our own efforts.
They grow in us when the spirit lives in us and inhabits us.
Paul says in Colossians 3:15
its when we let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts,
its when we let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly.
Its when we let our songs and our worship stir
gratitude in our hearts that we begin to look like Jesus.

Today I would like to emphasize three things about this
process of becoming like Jesus.
Three points to remind us how God makes us,
how the spirit molds us as a potter to be like Jesus.
We sometimes think that Romans 8:28 says;
“In most things, or in some things God works for the
good of those who love him.”

But is that what it says?
Paul says “in ALL things God works for the good of those
who are called according to his purpose.” In all things.

This includes bad things, even sin.
It doesn't say all things are good,
It says God uses in all things to make us like Jesus.

If we look at how this works in the bible we discover that
God uses especially times trouble and trial and
hardship to teach us to trust him.
That was the number one characteristic of Jesus.
He trusted his father even to the point of death.
It doesn't take faith and it doesn't take character or
Christ likeness if your life is comfortable and affluent.
Its troubles and hardships that make us grow.
God wants to build character in us, the character of Jesus.
In Romans 5:3 Paul says
Trouble produces patience, patience produces
character, and character produces hope.

God is interested in who we are, in our character.
And so if you let him God can use your struggles, your
pains and your troubles to build Christ likeness in you.

When Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane
he went through his deepest struggle and pain.
He prayed that God would remove the cup of
suffering from him for it was crushing him.
And that is how we feel sometimes too.
But notice how Jesus responds to his troubles.
Father, he says, everything is possible for you.
Yet not my will but your will be done.
I trust you completely.

When we go through our troubles and our pains,
its OK to lament to God and
to tell God you don't like it and
you may even plead with God to take it away.
But the Christ like mature response is to trust God and
to surrender to his will.
God knows what is good for his children and
what fulfills his purpose.
So if there is one thing we can learn from Jesus it is
we've got to trust God completely,
even when things look terrible, or things are falling apart.

The goal of life is not comfort or security.
The goal of holy Spirit working is us
is to produce trust, hope and love.
And God uses all things to produce this good in us.

The second surprising way God works in our lives
to make us look more like Jesus is temptations.
God uses temptations to teach us to obey him.
Temptations are situations - attractive situations that
can to draw us away from God and his purpose.
Temptations are things that if we pursue them harm us.
When we choose for God and
the purposes he has for our lives
instead of those things that draw away from God and
his family we grow and mature and develop
Christ likeness in us.

Jesus too faced temptations.
Right after he was baptized he went through a 40 day
period of temptation.
Satan desired to draw Jesus away from God and
God's purpose for him.
But Jesus using the word God
obeyed God's will instead of his own.
He came out of that of temptation stronger and
more prepared and more deeply convicted of his call
more focused on his purpose.
Temptations always test whether
you love God more than the temptation.
It's always a test of what you love the most in life.
When I'm tempted by money, or comfort,
or a good reputation, its always a matter of who
or what do I love more.
Obedience, choosing to say "yes" to God is a matter of
love, not a matter of duty.
Jesus said "If you love me you will obey my command."

The Holy Spirit makes us more like Jesus
when we choose to obey God,
even when we do not understand the logic,
or the cost seems so great.
And so God uses trouble to teach us to trust, and
God uses temptations to teach us to obey.
And as we trust and obey we become more like Jesus.
And finally God uses trespasses to teach us to forgive.
Trouble and pain are ways

God uses to draw us closer to himself.
Temptations are situations and things
Satan uses to draw us away from God, and
trespasses are things other people do
to hurt us and draw us away from God and
his purposes for our lives.
Its one thing to go through trouble,
its another to resist temptations.
But the most difficult tool God uses
to make us like Jesus is when others hurt us.
That draws us into a desire to retaliate and get angry.
To our hearts harden.
Many people have given up on God's family,
even on God because of what other people have done
to them. What parents have done, or
church people have done, or friends have done,
or pastors have done.

Jesus too was hurt by people. He was misunderstood.
Ridiculed. Criticized, hit, even crucified.
These were people who represented God,
they were his family and friends.
Yet while he was hanging on the cross, Jesus said;
"Father, forgive them for they don't know what
they are doing."

What was Jesus response to the hurts and pains others
inflicted on him? He gave up his right of get even.
He prayed to God and
let the abuse of others go in the hands of God.
He did not repay evil for evil instead,
he prayed for his enemies.

The truth about life is that you and I are going to get hurt.
We live in a fallen world.
We hurt each other intentional and unintentionally, and
all of us get hurt.
If we are going to become Christlike,
if we are going to be sons and daughters of God,
to bear the image of God in us,
we need to learn to forgive as the Lord forgave us.

So that is the third purpose in life.
We are here on earth so that we can be and
become the persons God intended us to be when
he made us. Imaging him and becoming like Jesus.

Our purpose, our goal in life is
to grow and mature into Christ likeness.
To put childish ways behind us and
become the men and women of faith, hope, and
love God meant us to be.
To trust, to obey, and to forgive as Jesus did.

This is not easy. Being a Christian is not easy,
Sanctification is not easy
Following Jesus is not easy
That is why we called it a life of discipleship
This we I encourage you to cooperate with the Spirit.
This week I encourage you to read the
purpose Driven life carefully.
Rick Warren has some excellent practical
suggestions about how we can participate with the
Holy Spirit in this process of becoming Christ like.

I also encourage you to do the memory work for this week.

And remember Christ likeness
is not produced by imitation but by habitation,
by Christ living in you,
by the holy Spirit living in you and
letting them rule your heart.

Lets pray:

Dear Father, life makes so much more sense when we realize that it's not about our career, or about our comfort, but mostly about becoming like Jesus. Help us to live this purpose, help us desire that goal.

Dear Holy Spirit, I want to grow in character.
I want to become who you made me to be.
Thank you for Jesus. I want to be more like him
in the way I think, and the way I feel, and the way I act.
And if that means taking me through troubled times,
then I say "I want your will for my life."
And if that means going through a wilderness of temptation,
please give me the strength to make the right choices.
And if that means I must endure the hurts of other people,
then teach me to forgive as you have forgiven me.

Dear Jesus, I can't live like you unless I know you. Help me to know you more and more.
Come into life and my heart, and fill me with your holy Spirit. For the glory of God I
pray. Amen.

*This sermon is based on the sermon outline provided by Rick Warren in the 40 Days of Purpose Campaign package.