



INTRO:

So we've come to, you could call it, the thematic-middle of **2 Corinthians 5:11-21** - meaning the point at which, the Apostle Paul, who as we've seen, has shared his *ministry motivations*, in order to get the church in Corinth to re-believe his Gospel-message - transitions in order to really start unpacking that message - show you what the Gospel is. What it is that we believe, beginning with - as we saw last week - Jesus having died for all/for you!... Paul unpacking WHY Jesus actually did that - the **PURPOSE** for His death, AND subsequently the **purpose** your life is to have!... **Purpose!**

One of the most influential sermons of the last 25 years was one which took place in a large field on a farm outside of Memphis, TN. It was a windy, rainy day, on which close to 40,000 college students were packed-in and mostly shivering. When the keynote speaker stood up to preach, a gust of wind blew half his notes into the crowd - which, I'll just tell ya, other than preaching to an empty room is tops in terms of pastoral nightmares I have - But the speaker leaned on his lectern to pin his remaining notes down with his arm, said a quick prayer, regained his composure, and then told this story: *"Three weeks ago we got word at our church that Ruby Eliason and Laura Edwards were killed in (a car crash) in Cameroon. Ruby was over 80. Single all her life, she poured it out for one great thing: to make Jesus Christ known among the unreached, the poor, and the sick, he said. Laura was a widow, a medical doctor, pushing 80 years old, and serving at Ruby's side in Cameroon. The brakes (on their car) failed, they went over a cliff, and were both killed instantly. And then the speaker paused and said, So I asked my people: Were their lives wasted? Is their story nothing but the sad tragedy of two older ladies, who wasted their lives, in the wrong place, doing the wrong thing, at the wrong time?"* - And if you were there or ya go back and watch recordings of the message, you see that the crowd was almost confused at the question, UNTIL a couple of folks yelled back, *"No!"* To which the preacher echoed, *"No, this is NOT a tragedy! But I'll tell you what is."* And he pulled out a page from a travel magazine and he read the following: *"Bob and Penny took early retirement from their jobs in the Northeast five years ago when he was 59 and she was 51. Now they live in Punta Gorda, Florida, where they cruise on their 30-foot trawler, play softball, and collect shells."* He continued: *"The American Dream: come to the end of your life - your one and only life - and let the last great work before you give an account to your Creator be, 'I collected shells. Lord, see my shells.' THAT is a tragedy, he said!...DON'T waste your life!"*...The preacher was a man by the name of John Piper and that sermon became known as the "seashell sermon," from which a best-selling book was written entitled, *Don't Waste Your Life*.

And I mention it this morning because it sets up the question, which Paul answers today; namely, what's to be your **purpose**? When all is said and done, we all wanna look back on our lives and know that they haven't been wasted **right**? That they've counted and had meaning and **purpose**. And because according to the Harvard Business Review,¹ most of us feel we've never found our purpose, or that we've lost it, or are just, in some way, falling short of it, we're looking at what Paul says is the reason for WHY Jesus actually died for you, and the **purpose** He therefore

¹ "How do I find my purpose?" - Harvard Business Review, John Coleman, October 20, 2017

intends your life/OUR lives together, to have?...SO, if you would, follow along as we hear the reading of God's word and what it says ABOUT **Church Being Purposeful!**...**(PAUSE RECORD)** **Matt** reads...

TEXT:

Hey, can we thank BOTH **Matt** AND God for the reading of His Word? **(START RECORD)**... One of the things that's really striking about our focal verse/v.15 there, is how straight-forward it is. Paul, quite simply, tells us, *Jesus died for all, THAT* - and the Greek word there is a little conjunction, "iva" - literally means "aim/purpose."² So Paul's saying, "*the purpose for which Jesus died is SO THAT,*" as he says, "*YOU might no longer live for yourself, but rather live for Him!*" Your **purpose** in life/the reason Jesus came, died and ultimately rose is so that YOU might live for Him! That simple! Wondering why God's made you the way He has; given you the opportunities He has; blessed you in the ways in He has; even withheld from you what He's withheld? It's so that you might live for Him!

But there's a **Problem**. *You see it in what Paul says?* Our **problem** is that we live for ourselves. As he says, Jesus died so that we might "*live for Him and no longer for ourselves.*" ***Have you ever considered how much of your life is lived "for yourself" - you being at the center of things?*** I've shared this with you before, but it's like what we all do when lookin' at a group photo...First thing we do is find us in the group right? See how we look! And you and I both know, it doesn't matter if the whole group looks whack; if we look good, that's a photo worth framing! We put ourselves at the center!...Years ago, the Minnesota Crime Commission put out a report. 77 page report in which they stated, quote, "*Every baby starts as a little savage. - Sorry parents - (They're) completely selfish and self-centered. (They) want what (they) want when (they) want it: bottle, mother's attention, playmate's toys, uncle's watch, whatever. Deny (them) these and (they) seethe with rage and aggressiveness WHICH would be murderous were (they) not so helpless...This means, the report stated, that all children, not just certain children, all children are born delinquent. (And) if permitted to continue in their SELF-CENTERED world of infancy, given free reign to their impulsive actions to satisfy each want, every child would grow up a criminal, thief, killer, or rapist.*"³ Not exactly the most positive outlook on humanity, but it's true **right?** From the time we come out of the womb, the logic that runs our lives, is as Rene Bruehl says, "*how can we best satisfy ourselves?*"⁴ We live for ourselves! If there was a theme song for humanity it'd be Sinatra's "I Did It My Way" **right?** And BECAUSE we exert such a gravitational pull of everyone and everything toward ourselves, even the way we relate to God can be selfish!...For example, think about your life goals. I know one Pastor who likes to ask people about their ambitions, because he always gets back responses like: "*I wanna be a great doctor; teach kids. I wanna maximize my talents. I wanna do what I love so I never feel like I have to work a day in my life! I wanna make a good enough living to take care of my family.*"

² William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 475.

³ Report from the Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology 18, no. 1 (May 1927) as written in the Minnesota Crime Commission Report of 1926, which was commissioned by then Governor Theodore Christianson. Cited in MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series: Ephesians, 309.

⁴ The Paradox of Happiness- Discovering Jesus' Call to Fullness of Life - René Bruehl (Kindle Reading Notes, loc. 335)

And it's not that any of those are bad. Most of em are really good. It's just that they don't begin with God. They begin with us - and at best, trying to fit God into OUR stories rather than surrendering to His... This is why Jonathan Edwards, at one point, said that it's possible to be attracted to God's love, mercy and power, BUT out of selfish motives. Cuz maybe you have guilt you want God's love to get rid of, or ya just need God, in His power, to handle and do things for ya. And so you come to Him, but not really for Him, as much as for Him to help YOU live for yourself.⁵ This is our **Problem!** As C.S. Lewis said in *Mere Christianity*, "*the moment we have a self, there's the possibility of putting ourselves first...which was in fact the sin of Satan and the sin he taught the human race, when he put into the heads of our ancestors the idea that they could 'be like god.'*" We're hardwired for to live for ourselves, WHICH apart from being an insult to God and subjecting us to His wrath; also just makes - have you ever thought about this - for a very non-dynamic, sorta small life. There was a psychologist, who concluded that contrary to the popular belief that living for yourself allows for healthy self-expression; the result is actually...REpression! Concluded, quote, "*self-interest fosters self-absorption and thereby constricts the range and depth of gratifications available in pursuing interests in other people, activities, and events.*"⁶ In other words, living for yourself, ironically, locks and cages you within yourself. Perhaps why actor Jim Carrey once said, "*I think everybody should get rich, famous, and do everything they ever dreamed, so they can see that it's not the answer.*"⁷ This is our **Problem** and the reason Jesus died - so that we WON'T live for ourselves, but INSTEAD - here's the **Solution** - "*live for him who for our sake died and was raised.*"

If the problem is that we live for ourselves, then the **Solution** is to live for Jesus! Or said another way, Jesus died so that your **purpose** in life would be living for Him!...And I know you might hear that and think, "*of course that's what a Pastor would say. Live for Jesus.*" But understand, I'm not/PAUL'S not saying that because it's the "*good Christian*" thing. He's saying that because when you live for Jesus, what you find is that you're actually free...to really LIVE! C.S. Lewis observed that just like a car is made to run on certain fuels and won't run on anything else; BECAUSE God made you for Himself, you're necessarily designed to run on Him... CONSEQUENTLY, the more you choose TO run on God/live for Him/let Him take you over; the more you actually become FREE to be your true self and therefore really live; PRECISELY BECAUSE He made you. You understand, He invented all the different people that you and I were intended to be. And so when you turn-to and live for Christ/when you give up yourself to His personality, YOU begin to have a real personality of your own,⁸ which of course is incredibly enlivening! I don't mean to get overly psycho-analytical on ya here, but the reason we have such a hard time finding or even holding onto our **purpose** is because we don't have a sense of who we really are. A couple weeks ago, I shared with you the idea from one of my favorite atheists Jean Paul Sartre, who said that, "*inside every human heart, whether you believe in God or not, is*

⁵ Edwards insight cited by Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013)

⁶ The Paradox of Happiness- Discovering Jesus' Call to Fullness of Life - René Breuel (Kindle Reading Notes, loc. 703, 896)

⁷ #BeyondDumbandDumber - Cited in "Living with Purpose" // Romans 15:14-33 // *Romans #30x* by J.D. Greear

⁸ Explanation adapted a C.S. Lewis quote cited in *A Purpose Driven Life* - Rick Warren, p.80

a voice that whispers, ‘not acceptable!’ ‘condemned!’”⁹ After the Fall/after we got cut off from a consistent understanding and experience of God’s love for us, we subsequently got cut off from an understanding of our “enough’ness” IN God’s love. And so ever since then, it’s like we’ve been on this quest of doing things and trying to become things to regain that sense of “enough’ness.” We don’t know who we are, because we don’t know WHOSE we are. And therefore we can’t know WHAT we’re to be about/WHAT our ***purpose*** is!

But Friends, that’s EXACTLY the beauty of living for Jesus! When you submit your life to Jesus, as the One who made you and therefore knows best for you; you get freed from the constant quest to be enough or do enough. Because of course, Jesus WAS enough and DID enough for you to be loved-by and reconnected-to the God of the Universe! So think about the implications of that with respect to your identity and ***purpose***: There’s now, for example, no image for you to maintain BECAUSE you know you’re made in the image of God... There’s no identity for you to discover or create BECAUSE your identity is found in Jesus’ love for you... You have no need to to justify yourself before others BECAUSE you’re justified by the God of the universe... AND there’s no ***PURPOSE*** you gotta find or hold onto, BECAUSE you’re created to live for Him. You understand, those are incredibly FOUNDATIONAL things that make it possible for you to really live!... It’s like all the new skyscrapers being built in the Seaport. When a skyscraper’s built, what’s the first thing builders do? They did a huge hole ***right?*** Dig down before they ever go up. And it looks totally counterproductive. BUT that’s because every builder knows, not only do you have to start with a foundation, but the higher the building is meant to go, the DEEPER the foundation needs to be!¹⁰... Friend, if you really wanna live/REALLY wanna reach real heights in life/have REAL ***purpose*** that you don’t get to the end and say, “*did my life have any meaning at all?*” your life HAS to be lived for Jesus, because He’s the only One who can give you a foundation of image, identity, justification, and the like, that’s deep enough to sustain those kinds of heights... If the problem is that we live for ourselves, then the ***Solution*** is to live for Jesus! It’s why He died! IT’S... YOUR... ***PURPOSE!*** *Is that your purpose today?*

Next week we’ll talk in more detail about what it practically looks like TO live for Jesus, but suffice it to say, if you’ve ever been to the doctor, you know a good physician’ll give you a diagnosis and a prognosis/tell ya the problem AND give ya the solution. But at the end of the day, of course, you gotta appropriate the solution... The same is true with living for God. You can know that your ***problem*** is living for yourself and that the ***solution*** is to live for Jesus, but if you don’t appropriate that, nothing changes... So how do we really begin to live FOR Jesus, which is to say overcome any fears we might have about surrendering TO Him OR just how do we get past living FOR Him, but merely out of duty?... Take a look, finally, at what Paul says at the end of ***v.15***. He says, we’re to live for Jesus, “*who for (our) sake died and was raised.*” “*For our sake!*” That’s the key phrase! Cuz we’re being told there, that we don’t live for, for example, a tradition that’s gotten passed down to us, but which, over time, has increasingly less value - ya know “heirloom Jesus.”... Nor do we live for one who merely represents our preferred political

⁹ Satre quote adapted from citation in “What Went Wrong” // Genesis 3:1–19 // *The Whole Story* #3 - J.D. Greear

¹⁰ Skyscraper Illustration taken from *Thoughts To Make Your Heart Sing: Skyscraper* - Sally Lloyd Jones

beliefs - “political Jesus.”...And we certainly don’t live for “insurance agent Jesus,” who “like a good neighbor” is relied upon in a crisis, but is largely forgotten when things are good.¹¹ No! We live for one who “*died and was risen FOR our sake!*” Someone who’s loved you to the point of having died FOR you! As **John 15:13** says, “*there’s no greater love than THAT/that someone would lay down his life for his friends.*”

When you find out that someone really loves you - CERTAINLY someone important - what does it make you do? It makes you wanna return love and affection to em **right**? You, in a sense, get transformed. Cuz maybe you’d never thought about the person in that way before. Never been interested. Maybe even sworn off love. But when you see the lengths to which they go to really love and win YOU over, you, in a sense, come to “*love them because of how they first loved you!*” It’s like in *Beauty And The Beast*.¹² In *Beauty And The Beast* you have this man who’s disfigured to the point of being beyond human likeness BECAUSE of the selfish, self-centered way-of-life he’s lead. He’s literally become ugly BECAUSE of the ugliness of his own heart. And the result is that he’s full of fear about loving and being loved, because he KNOWS he’s ugly. He won’t let himself love/be loved, and any modicum of love he DOES display, like with his friends - Lumière, Cogsworth, Chip, Mrs. Potts, etc - is really just pretty superficial and obligatory...In many respects - though Disney might not know it - it’s one of the best pictures of the human condition. Cuz all of us know that if people really saw what was on the inside of us - ALL the ugly ways we live for ourselves and put ourselves first - they’d find us ugly too. And so like Beast, we keep people at a distance. We don’t let em in. Don’t show our weaknesses. OR we focus on things like trying to look good physically, improving our talent, making money, among other self-serving things we THINK will make us “attractive,” BUT only end up perpetuating more “ugliness,” as we continue to live for ourselves....That was Beast...UNTIL **what saves and transforms Him**? Beauty kissing him **right**? Belle being willing to kiss him. **And why would she do that**? Because she loved him! EVEN in his self-serving ugliness, she loved him!

Friends, not only is that a picture of what Jesus has done for you - loved you despite your self-serving ugliness - but Jesus went a step further than Beauty ever did! Because in “*dying and rising FOR YOUR SAKE,*” Jesus, you understand, BECAME the beast in your place, so that you can look like a beauty now...That’s the Gospel! “*He who knew no sin, was made to BE sin, so that in him (you) might become the righteousness of God.*” Think about that! THAT kind of love? It transforms you like it did Beast. It moves you from living for yourself to living for Him. Cuz when you see Jesus loving you to the point of dying and rising FOR you, it does two things. **On the one hand**, it assuages any fears you might have about surrendering TO Jesus, cuz you see that you’re giving yourself to One who will only ever love you perfectly! And then on the other hand it eviscerates any sort of merely obligatory love, because how could you be neutral/even cold toward one whose loved you so deeply and passionately?...There’s a reason why the “Beauty and the Beast” theme appears in so many of our fairy tales: It’s because, deep-down, we yearn for it to be true!...Friends, it it! And not only is a love like that true, but when you really

¹¹ Conceptions of Jesus from <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/will-the-real-jesus-please-stand-up#When:2016-10-19T05:00:00+00:00>

¹² Illustration adapted from “God’s Miraculous Love Letter” // Isaiah 52–53 // The Whole Story #21 - J.D. Greear

take it in - and not just once, but continually, as you prioritize gathering here to be reminded of it; and meeting within your Missional Family, to apply it, or just studying in your own daily, Bible reading - you begin to see that the sacrificial love of Christ is the engine for a life of real ***purpose!*** It's the fuel you're designed to run on!...***Don't you see? So let me close by asking:*** Knowing that Jesus died and was raised, so that you'd live for him rather than yourself: ***What's your purpose today? Or better said, who are you living for? ...Let's Pray...***