

“The Big Picture”

*The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – July 31, 2022
Colossians 3:1-11*

Have you ever paused long enough to think about junk? That rusted wreck of a car in the junkyard was once new, shiny, sleek, and desirable. Those clothes we threw away or gave away were once new, fashionable, and desirable. Not anymore.

I believe that too many people are trying to find money where there is no money. They are trying to find happiness where there is no happiness. They are trying to find comfort and security where there is none. They are trying to find something where there is nothing. What we see in this life is only temporary. It is not lasting. It is not eternal. It will never fully satisfy.

We all need to look beyond this life and see the eternal. We need to see the big picture instead of our own little world. We need to see the eternal world more than this one.

Rick Warren hit the nail on the head in his book THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE. Warren said, “It’s not about you. The purpose of your life is greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It’s far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by His purpose and for His purpose.”

To put it simply: life begins with God. Life ends with God. And somehow, we must sandwich Him in the middle of our lives.

Rick Warren says that life is about worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and mission.

Even though some of you may know about God's purpose for your life, let's consider His purpose in detail.

I. WORSHIP - YOU WERE PLANNED FOR GOD'S PLEASURE

A congregation decided to have four worship services each Sunday. There was one for those new to the faith - FINDERS. Another for those who liked traditional worship - KEEPERS. One for those who'd lost their faith and would like to get it back - LOSERS. And another for those who had bad experiences with churches and were complaining about it - WEEPERS.

FINDERS, KEEPERS, LOSERS, WEEPERS.

Regardless of who we are: finders, keepers, losers, or weepers, we all need to worship God. Regardless of where we are spiritually. We all need to worship God. This is God's will or purpose for our lives.

Heb. 10: "LET US DRAW NEAR TO GOD WITH A SINCERE HEART IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, ... AND LET US CONSIDER HOW WE MAY SPUR ONE ANOTHER ON TOWARD LOVE AND GOOD DEEDS. LET US NOT GIVE UP MEETING TOGETHER, AS SOME ARE IN THE HABIT OF DOING, BUT LET US ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER."

Let us draw near to God. That's worship and it pleases God when we worship Him. Why should we not worship Him? He created us. He gives us life and breath and everything else.

Worship is drawing near to God in faith and offering Him praise for who He is and what He has done.

Someone said, "As a tear magnifies grief, as laughter magnifies humor, as a smile magnifies joy, so worship magnifies God."

Worship magnifies God in the sense that it enhances or multiplies our appreciation of Him. The more we focus on Him and praise Him, the more we think of Him and appreciate Him.

God wants us to worship Him both publicly and privately. Every time you sit down to read your Bible, you are worshipping God. Every time you offer a prayer, you are worshipping. Every time you say, "Thank you, God" for something, you are worshipping.

Let us not give up meeting together. That's public worship and we all need it. It's special, different, encouraging, stimulating, helpful, etc.

It's like going to a ball game in person. You don't even have to like the sport. But your attendance helps you get caught up in the spirit of the game and get a lot more out of it. SO IT IS, WITH CHURCH.

This time of the year we might be tempted to miss church for one reason or another. DON'T DO IT! If you're in town, go to church. If you're out of town, go to church or watch it online. USE IT OR LOSE IT. The less you worship and participate, the less faith you will have. You will only hurt yourself by missing church worship. GOD'S PURPOSE IS FOR YOU TO WORSHIP HIM!

II. FELLOWSHIP - YOU WERE FORMED TO BE PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

As Christians, we are called to belong, not just to believe. We are not meant to live "lone ranger" lives; instead, we are to belong to Christ's family and be members of his body. Baptism is not only a symbol of salvation; it is a symbol of fellowship. It not only symbolizes our new life in Christ, it visualizes a person's incorporation into the body of Christ. It says to the world, "This person is now one of us!" When new believers are baptized, we welcome them into the fellowship of the family of God. We are not alone. We have each other for support. The church exists to provide fellowship for believers.

III. DISCIPLESHIP - YOU WERE CREATED TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST

A big part of discipleship is becoming like Christ. We all need the sweet fragrance of Christ in our lives. We all need to grow in His likeness.

Most of us don't like something about ourselves. Perhaps our face, our teeth, our hair, our wrinkles, our weight, this bulge, that bulge.

Most of us want to look good, look our best, or at least, be somewhat presentable. I think most of us would like to change something about our appearance. However, the most important thing that we could change is our character. The physical is temporary, but the spirit is eternal. Your body is temporary, but the real you, your spirit, is eternal.

Our character grows and changes into the likeness of Christ when we study the scriptures, either in Bible study or our own personal quiet time with God. It changes when we work on our prayer life. When we have good understanding of what stewardship is all about. We are changed when we try to become like Christ in our thoughts and in our actions.

IV. MINISTRY - YOU WERE SHAPED FOR GOD'S SERVICE

Can a person be a part of a family and not contribute to that family? Even as a kid I had certain responsibilities or chores. I had to wash and/or dry the dishes, carry out the trash, mow the grass, help keep my room clean, etc. Some of you had even more to do: like cooking, doing laundry, ironing clothes, etc. It was just a part of being in the family.

Being a part of the family means being involved in service in some form or another. And so, with the church.

What can you do in the church to help serve? You can bring food when we have dinners, do dishes, clean up, carry out trash, help clean the building, teach a Sunday School class, work with the youth, make phone calls to the elderly, sing with the choir, bring special music, offer to give a Children's sermon, etc.

We need to make God's business, our business. God's purpose is, that we all get involved in some kind of meaningful Christian service!

V. MISSION - YOU WERE MADE TO TELL OTHERS ABOUT CHRIST

Max Lucado wrote these words in his book, IT'S NOT ABOUT ME. Pony Express riders had one assignment – deliver the message safely and quickly. They seized every advantage: the shortest route, the fastest horse, the lightest saddle. Only the sturdy were hired. The young and the orphans were preferred.

The apostle Paul was much like the Pony Express rider. Hard worker, long hours, but the message had to be delivered!

Rom. 1:14-16 “I AM OBLIGATED BOTH TO GREEKS AND NON-GREEKS, BOTH TO THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH. THAT IS WHY I AM SO EAGER TO PREACH THE GOSPEL ALSO TO YOU WHO ARE AT ROME. I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL, BECAUSE

IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR THE SALVATION OF EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES: FIRST FOR THE JEW, THEN FOR THE GENTILE.”

We, too, have an obligation to get the message out to others. Most of us just haven't caught the vision, or perhaps don't have the commitment or concern.

We must strive to tell God's story if not with words, then with our lives. We must allow our lives to preach to the world about love, hope, and peace. We bring this message with the hope that the church will grow, and our congregation will feel the spirit alive once again with the excitement of people whose lives have changed from bad to better, from hopelessness to joy, from misery to the ultimate peace. We are called to be a part of that movement. It is not a choice; it is either you are faithful or not.

We must strive to push forward in faith, hope and love.

We must strive to be better people than what we are, in fact
to become the people God created us to be.

That means we must grow and change in that growth.

If we always do what we've always done,
we'll always be where we've always been.

The past is behind us. The world has changed, and the church must change with it. We can only live today and prepare for tomorrow. Amen.