

Sunday: Second Sunday In Lent  
Date: February 28, 2021  
Text: Mark 8:27-38  
Title: With Purpose, on Purpose

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Please pray with me.

When you have a purpose in life, you do things on purpose. If you have a goal, a reason, an aim in life, then you are going to do things intentionally to reach that purpose or goal.

So, what do people say might be a goal in their life? Well, one might be to make money so they can do what they want to do, go where they want to go, buy what they want to buy. They want to have enough financial resources to have a nice house, a car to drive, or a comfortable retirement. So, they get a job, they work, they do things intentionally in order to accomplish that purpose of make money.

Some people might say that they want power to be able to control their lives, to take charge of who they are and what they get to do and say. They want to say something and have other people do things for them. Some people simply want to have control of those “take charge” opportunities in life. So, they will do things to make that happen.

Other people want to be popular. They want to be liked. They want to be a part of the group. They want to be included. They want a certain prestige and to be looked up to. So, they will do things intentionally, on purpose, to reach that goal.

When you have a purpose in Life, you do things on purpose to reach it. So, what is your purpose in life?

## I

Before you answer that, we need to look at what happened to Jesus in this Bible passage. He’s on the road to Caesarea Philippi, and he asks the disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” (v 27). He gets the answers: “John the Baptist come back from the dead.” “one of the prophets.” “Elijah.”

Then he turns it on those who are with him. “Who do you say that I am?” Peter, one of the disciples, speaks up and says, “You are the Christ” (v 29). Great answer. Wonderful answer. But he has got the wrong idea about what the Christ would do. The Christ, the one whom God is going to send—well, Peter thinks this is going to be somebody with power to make his dreams come true. He’s hoping that the Christ will overthrow the Roman government so that they can be free, so there will be no more oppression. He believes that the Christ will show incredible political and military power. As for money and possessions, this Christ will give them a country where everybody will be safe, they can have whatever they want, and they will be able to do whatever they want. It will be a wonderful place to live, with no worries. What’s more the disciples will get prime spots, prestige and people looking up to them. They will be welcomed and well liked.

But that’s not the type of Christ Jesus had to be. He had to correct this false understanding of what the Christ will do and what purpose he has. So, he says, “The Son of Man *must*” (v 31). The word for must in Greek is just three letters long. It’s only a δ, an ε and an ι—δει. It means “it is necessary.” It has to happen. It must occur. The Son of Man must be rejected. He must suffer. He must be killed. So, Jesus has this purpose in his life.

## II

Now don’t think that any of these things that happened to him happened because the Romans were in control. Sure, they might have had political power, and they were in charge of the crucifixion. But they were not the ones in control. As for the Jewish leaders, those scribes and Pharisees and chief priests, they were not in control either, even though they ran the trial. Even Peter, when he tries to stop Jesus by saying, “This will never happen to you!” he is not in control either.

Jesus is the one with the power. Jesus is the one doing everything on purpose. Just before this incident, Jesus healed a blind man and made a deaf man hear. Jesus has fed thousands of people with fish and bread. He’s cast out a demon from a young girl. Right after this text, Jesus is going up a mountain to be transfigured with all his power and glory on display, dazzling white light for Peter, James, and John to see.

Later, when Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night when he is betrayed, the mob comes to arrest him. Peter impulsively pulls out a sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest’s servant. Jesus says, “Stop, don’t you realize I can call down a dozen legions of angels to protect me?” Jesus allows himself to be

arrested. When he stood before Pilate, the Roman governor, he could have said some things and gone free, but he stays silent. He is going to be crucified on purpose. When he is with the Sanhedrin, those religious leaders, they ask him a question: “Are you the Christ, the Son of God?” Jesus says, “I am.” I AM is the name God gives himself in the Old Testament. So, when Jesus claims that name, he has forced their hand. He is guilty of blasphemy in their eyes. They will condemn him to death.

Yes, Jesus could have stopped his arrest, his suffering, his trial, his execution at any time he wanted to. He was the one who was in control. Yet he had a purpose. Everything he did was on purpose. He did all this for you, for me. To forgive us. To save us. To make us brothers and sisters in Christ.

#### IV

Now, having heard Jesus’ purpose, and what he did on purpose, let’s go back to the question for you: “What is **your** purpose in life?” Of course, you can have a number of them. I am not going to boil it down to just one. But we do have a clear purpose given at the end of our Bible passage for this message: we’re to take up our cross, deny ourselves, and follow Jesus. What might that purpose of denying ourselves, taking up our crosses, and following Jesus look like? Here are a few examples I came across.

The first one has to do with advertisements, actually public service announcements, from a number of years ago. The Ad Council put them out. In one, a man climbed up some stairs on crutches. A voice then told the viewer that the man would have learned to walk if only someone had given money to build a rehab center. A similar commercial showed a woman alone in a room. A voice told the viewer that this woman almost received a meal and a visit from someone. But she didn’t. The point of these ads was to help people realize the good they can do that would not happen if they do not give of their time and money. So, what do we do when we deny ourselves and follow Jesus? We give. We give of that money we may have worked so hard to get so that we could buy what we wanted for ourselves. We give of time, even though we will get little fame for doing so. We do this on purpose.

I read about some research that was done by studying obituaries. Over the course of a number of months, the researchers read through a couple thousand obituaries. What were they looking for in those obituaries? They wanted to know what words were used most often to describe people’s lives. Guess what the

number one word was: *help*. The word that was used most often was *help*. People were not remembered for their position or popularity or power or how much money they had. They were remembered because they helped others. They helped veterans or the disabled or some organization. To follow Jesus is to be remembered as someone who intentionally helped, who took up the task of loving a neighbor as Jesus has loved us.

I know many people who are blood donors. As the pints add up, they become gallons. Many of my friends have given multiple gallons of blood. This is a simple thing but requires you to go to the blood donation center, stay there for the duration of the blood donation, and allow your blood to be extracted and saved for use by a total stranger. This requires purposefulness on the part of the donor. It is the giving of time, and of yourself. It is something we can do on purpose that Jesus has called us to do: to follow him and give of ourselves for someone else, to deny what we may want and instead give away what someone else needs.

See how this works? You do something on purpose because you have a purpose in life. As Christians, our purpose in life is to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Jesus. Why? Because Jesus had a purpose. On purpose, he suffered. It was necessary for him to die. He had to be killed and then rise again. He did all this on purpose on purpose for you and for me, all to give us life and to give us a clear purpose for the lives we live each day.

Our purpose, in each of our vocations is to show Jesus to be the presence of Christ for our neighbor. To bring the love of Christ to all the people and situations we encounter. It is not our doing, but the good works God has planned for us to do as his beloved children.

To strengthen us for this purpose God sent His only Son to die for us. He picks us up when we stumble. He forgives us when we fail to reflect him in our lives. He absolves us of our sins. He gives us the seal of adoption in our baptism. He feeds us with the eternal life-giving food of his body and blood in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. As we are restored and nourished by this meal, we are strengthened to fulfill our purpose to the glory of God.

May we all embrace our purpose as heirs of the kingdom and reflect the love of God in our lives. Amen.