

The Purpose of God for You
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People from all walks of life in every stage of life wonder about it: what is my purpose? 18 year old graduates dream about what they should do with their lives. What major should I get? What career should I pursue? When we go through trials and our vision of life gets rearranged we wonder, "What is my purpose? What should I be doing?" Now that your children are all grown up and moved out of the house, maybe you are surprised that you are struggling and you're asking, "Now what should I be doing with my life?" Maybe you are now a widow and you wonder, "What's my life supposed to look like now?"

If you are a Christian, which means you believe that God is writing the story of your life for your good and for his glory, the question takes on a religious flavor. What is *God's* purpose for my life? What does *God* want me to do? Well, the scriptures give us an answer (more than one, actually). But God's answer for us today is a little different than what we're probably looking for. I say that because oftentimes we are looking for an answer that is too small. What I mean by that is we oftentimes are stuck thinking about our purpose this side of heaven and we forget to live for what is unseen. We think and hope our purpose has something to do with the here and now; worldly success, worldly dreams, worldly notoriety and worldly comfort. I hope you've been noticing in the gospel of Luke that God isn't very concerned about those things. He's not so concerned if you're wealthy, healthy or happy on this earth. He's not so concerned whether your dreams are fulfilled or not. He's really not that interested in your bucket list. He has a higher purpose for you. And part of that purpose is spelled out in this passage today. If you're interested in seeing that, turn with me to Luke 7 and read with me (READ vs. 24-35).

In the previous passage, Jesus just warned John the Baptist not to fall away from following our Lord. It can happen to the best of us; no one is immune from walking away from Jesus. But look what Jesus says of John in the next section; vs. 28 says, "I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John." That's pretty high praise, isn't it? How is John the greatest born of women? I don't want to spend too much time on this, but I'm thinking it has to do with the role God has given him on earth. Surely, he was a man of character, a man of ability; he was great that way. But what made John so utterly unique in contrast to everyone else on earth was his unique call and mission in salvation history. John was the one who got people ready to turn to the Lamb of God, Jesus of Nazareth.

But then we hear this remarkable statement from Jesus (vs. 28b): "Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." So, already Jesus is showing us there's a difference between worldly status and heavenly status. John's greatness, even though it revolved around ministry, it centered on gospel work, was of this world and of this time. But those least in the *kingdom of heaven* are greater than John. Do you see the contrast? There's an earthly realm and a heavenly one. Which one matters the most? Jesus makes that patently clear. The one to come; the coming kingdom of God.

Vs. 29-30 are critically important verses for us today; let's look at them (READ vs. 29-30).

Let's examine these questions. 1) What does it mean to declare God just? 2) And what was the purpose of God rejected by the Pharisees and lawyers?

Question #1. There's a way people declaring God just seems arrogant and blasphemous. Who in the world do we think we are to put ourselves in a position to determine and declare whether God is just or not? It's the height of pride. That's not what Luke is trying to say. Instead, this what Luke is saying: he's saying that God worked in these people's lives in such a way that they could rightly see that God was absolutely right in his plan for their lives. It's not that they presumed some authority over God to determine whether God was right or wrong; no, it's that they recognized as dependent creatures that God was right in all of his actions and they were agreeing with God. "God is just," they said, meaning, "God is right in what he's saying and doing." That's a good place to be, right? Agreeing with God.

What was God right or just about? Look at the phrase that immediately follows "they declared God just." It's this: "having been baptized with the baptism of John." That phrase is telling you and me how they made that declaration. They declared God just by being baptized by John. Get the picture, FBC. Imagine: you hear about this prophet named John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness. He's telling people about God. So, you go. You're hungry to learn more about God. And when you get there with the thousands of others coming from all over Israel, you hear John preach. You hear about the righteousness of God; and you're cut to the heart. You know what this man is saying about God, about you is true. And he says, "Be baptized, everyone of you." Well, what do you do? If you believe what you've been hearing, you get baptized, right? That's you agreeing with what you hear. That's you affirming, "God is just; God is right. And I'm getting baptized by the command of John because I agree with what I'm hearing." Being baptized was the way they declared that God was indeed right.

And what is God right about? To answer that question, all you have to is figure out what John's baptism was for. If the people's baptism declared that God was just and right in all that he said, what was John's baptism for? Let's find out; go back to Luke 3:1-3 (READ).

John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. So, putting all of this together means that those who were baptized (vs. 29 says the people, and even the tax collectors) said yes to God. They declared, "God is right in calling us to repentance. God is just in having us turn away from sin and to him." That's what God is right about. We do need to turn. We do need to follow God. We do need to forsake the way of self-love, self-determination, self-interest and protection. God is right in calling us to repentance. That's the answer to question 1: "what does it mean to declare God just?" So, know it my good brothers and sisters, but not just in here. Know it in here where you actually say and agree: God is right to say "Turn, Brian. Turn away from sin; turn to me." And remember this as it's very important as we move on.

Question #2: what was the purpose of God rejected by the Pharisees and lawyers? Look at vs. 30, "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized." I think we can all agree that rejecting the purpose of God for themselves was a bad thing, right? God has a purpose for you, he has a plan for you, which is for your good. Don't reject it. Receive it! Be like the people and the tax collectors who said, "Yes!" to God. The answer to our question is found the same way we answered question #1. Look at the very last phrase in vs. 30, which describes the Pharisees and lawyers response to John's preaching; they rejected the purpose of God by *not* being baptized. And again, FBC, what did the baptism represent? Repentance. Put two and two together, friends. The Pharisees and lawyers refused to repent, which was demonstrated by their failure to be baptized while the people, even the tax collectors, said yes to God by repenting and being baptized. And don't miss the big idea: Luke calls *that* the purpose of God for them.

Friends, God's purpose for you more than anything else is that you turn away from your sin and turn to God. As important as education is, as a healthy body is, as harmonious relationships are, that's not God's purpose for you; that's not more important than repenting and turning to God. As good and as enjoyable as ministry, music, hobbies, family times are, those things are not meant to be your purpose. They are not meant to be the reason you live. Those things that are we are so tempted to make our purpose (again, as good as they are) are of this world. They do not give access or entrance into the kingdom of God. Only one thing grants us access to God: the grace that produces turning from sin and turning to God.

Don't say, brothers and sisters, "Yeah, yeah, but..." "Yeah, yeah, I know this already." No! We don't know this like we need to know this. Every time you curse and question God in suffering you are showing you don't know this like you need to know this. Each time you squander the blessings of riches and time you are proving you don't know this like you need to know this. Every time you question God's wisdom and ignore God's word you are admitting you don't know this like you need to know this. Don't think turning from sin and turning to God is just a one-time thing; it is a lifestyle God mercifully calls us to until the day we die.

If you miss this, if you miss that entrance into the kingdom of God is absolutely more important than any other thing and that only comes through repenting of sin and turning to Jesus, the ways and wisdom of God won't make any sense to you. God's word and his way will seem confusing, it will seem boring, unfair and unjust. Let me show you how (READ vs. 31-35).

Jesus is being critical in this passage. When he says, "To what shall I compare the people of this generation," he's not thinking happy thoughts. He's like an exhausted and tired momma who's at her wits end with her children and is thinking, "Calgon, take me away!" That's what Jesus says these people are like... children. They are spoiled. One pastor said, "They are acting like brats!" How so? What does Jesus say about that?

The first thing he highlights is their response to John's ministry. The rebellious looked at John and thought, "Boring!" No dancing, no feasting. He won't come to our parties whether they

are frat parties or pity parties. John just won't get with our program. But the same people didn't like Jesus' ministry either, even though Jesus was carrying on in the opposite way of John. Jesus did party; Jesus did enjoy the creaturely blessings of God and the Pharisees said, "What a glutton and party animal!"

Can't win. Friends, get this: when you reject God's true purpose for you of turning away from sin and turning to God, you'll never be happy or content or understand the work of God in your life. You'll never understand the purpose of your suffering; you'll just curse God and call him unloving. You'll be bored and unfulfilled by abundance wondering, "Is this it?" You'll pick and choose what commands of Jesus to follow and only accept the one's that fit your lifestyle. Serving Jesus will usually feel like a chore rather than a joy. Seeing the first and true purpose of your life as always turning from sin and turning to God will unlock a deep and abiding trust in God no matter your circumstances and will set you on a course of fruitfulness for Jesus.

Do you know why? Because when you see this as your true purpose you are rightly seeing that God truly is your greatest treasure. When turning away from sin and turning to God becomes the most important thing you can do every single day your thinking will finally be rightly orientated towards the truth: (Ps. 73:25-26) Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

So, what will it be this morning, FBC? Will you embrace the purpose of God for you? Has God given you eyes to see that he is right in calling you to repent? To turn from your way, your sin, your pride every single day? Do you have eyes to see that following Jesus alone is God's purpose for you? I pray that you do, because when that happens you will live.

Key Verse: Luke 7:29-30 ~ When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.

Questions for the week

- Are there times when you're tempted to think God is wrong? When are those times?
- What did the text say is God's purpose for you?
- How does our first Heart Statement, "God is the greatest treasure" fit the message today?