

Purpose

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 December 2018

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] If you've got your Bible, you please stand as we honor the reading of God's Word together.

! Again, I'll be reading Hosea chapter 10 verses 1 through 8. This morning's sermon will cover verses 1 and 2. Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built. As his country improved, he improved his pillars.

Their heart is false. How they must bear their guilt! The Lord will break down their altars and destroy their pillars. For now they will say, We have no king, for we do not fear the Lord and the king. What could he do for us?

They utter mere words, with empty oaths they make covenants, so judgment springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field. The inhabitants of Samaria tremble for the calf of Beth-Avon. Its people mourn for it, and so do its idolatrous priests.

Those who rejoiced over it and over its glory, for it has departed from them. The thing itself shall be carried to Assyria as tribute to the great king. Ephraim shall be put to shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his idol.

[1 : 24] Samaria's king shall perish like a twig on the face of the waters. The high places of Avon, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed. Thorn and thistles shall grow up on their altars, and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, fall on us.

May God add a blessing to the reading of this word. Would you please be seated? What do you think is the meaning of your life?

Stop. Take a moment to think about that. What is the meaning of your life?

If someone was to ask you that question, say you had one of your sons, or your daughters, or your niece, or your nephew, or your grandchildren.

If one of them came up to you, a student, and they said, Hey, I have this project at school. I've got to ask people what the meaning and purpose of life is. How would you answer that question?

[2 : 28] What response would you give? What's the purpose of your life? What is the end goal that at this very moment, you are spending your time and your efforts pursuing?

Now, yes, that question, and many different people will answer that question in many different ways. Many different religions will answer that question in many different ways. Many different philosophers have tried to answer that question as well.

And though we can answer it in different ways, I think they basically are all giving the same answer. When you boil down what they are basically saying, the basic meaning, I think, that all these different religions, all these different philosophers, all these different philosophers, all these different people, are trying to say that the basic meaning and purpose of life is this.

That you be the best version of you that you can be. You be the best you that you can be. Now, that sounds good in theory.

And it certainly is an inoffensive message in these times when people's feelings are so easily hurt. You mean to say that my life is all about me? It's all about me making me feel better about myself?

[3 : 54] I can accept that message. I can accept that purpose. Now, I think that goals are important. I do. And I think that in whatever you endeavor to do, that you should set goals.

Otherwise, you'll end up putting your efforts in the wrong places, which will render the work that you're trying to do, trying to accomplish ineffective and inefficient in the end.

Without goals, you'll be spinning your wheels. You'll be grinding your gears. You'll be creating a lot of smoke and a lot of noise. But you won't be going anywhere. So I think goals are important.

So the question I want to pose to you now this morning is this. Is pursuing the best version of you really the best use of your time and efforts with the life that you have been given?

Is that the best use of your time and your resources? And I don't believe that it is. You may disagree with me.

[5 : 01] Many certainly would disagree with me. And that's fine. But I would like that you would hear me out before you storm out at the sanctuary upset and start composing your angry email in the pew right now in your mind that you're going to send to me later this week or the rebuttal that you're going to give to this message at lunchtime and you're going to tell everybody at your table how wrong I was.

Before you start thinking about that, I'd ask that you please just listen to what I have to say because I think it's important. This is your life. This is your purpose.

And I don't believe that the purpose of your life is to pursue the best version of you. And I believe that because I don't believe that it is what the Bible says that we were created for.

Why were we created? Was it really and truly that we could become the best version of us that we could be? If you want to know the purpose of something, the best place to start is with the one who made it.

When Danny and I moved into our house last year, we had a storage shed out in the backyard and it was filled with some things that belonged to the previous owner.

[6 : 18] And as we were sorting through some of those things, we saw something in the back corner and neither Danny or I knew what it was.

It was something you could tell had a design. It looked kind of like a table without a top. And so we could tell that it had some kind of a purpose, but neither of us knew what purpose it was.

And so we went to Google and we started trying to describe it and put it in there. And eventually we came to the answer is that it was a quilting frame.

We had no idea, found out what it was and slapped a sticker on it and sold it at a garage sale. But we didn't know. But obviously the maker of that knew exactly what it was for, what its intended use was, and that it did have a purpose.

Well, the Bible says that God is the creator of mankind. So if we want to know what mankind's purpose is, then the source of the answer, the best place to find that answer, obviously would be to ask that question of the maker of mankind.

[7 : 26] And then understanding his purpose for us will ensure that we don't waste our lives that he's given us by pursuing other purposes that we were not created by our maker to pursue.

So let's go back to the beginning. In Genesis. In Genesis. In verses 1, 26 through 27.

To understand what our purpose is. Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and of the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them.

And this passage explains that all human beings are made, are created in the image of God himself.

[8 : 37] So what does that mean? To be created in the image of God. I like this quote from R.C. Sproul. It's a little long, but hear him out. I think he explains it well.

Simply put, this means that we are somehow a copy of the Lord. This may be somewhat hard to conceptualize, for God does not have a physical body like we do, and he also lacks our limitations as created beings.

Nevertheless, like our Creator, we are rational beings who are able to communicate in words. We possess minds, wills, and hearts, all of which are analogous to God's own inner life.

Although unlike him, our knowledge is finite, and we are not laws unto ourselves. And he continues, Since we are made in his image, we bring the Lord the most glory when we reflect his character, when we truly image his goodness, his love, and holiness.

Our ability to do this is hampered by sin, but our Savior, by his Spirit, restores our ability to reflect God's image truly over the course of our lives.

[9 : 46] At the consummation, we will reflect the divine image to the fullest extent, glorifying him forever in the new heaven and in the new earth.

If our Maker's purpose for us is to shine forth his image, then this is the goal that we must spend our lives pursuing.

Because no other purpose will bring to you the same level of satisfaction that pursuing God's purpose for you will, not even close.

As a matter of fact, pursuing any other purpose will end with the same result, dissatisfaction in your life. And if you don't believe me, then I hope that you'll believe the words of Jesus Christ in John 17, 22 through 24.

As he's praying for his disciples, as he's praying for his church, that includes us, he says, And so Jesus' prayer for us is that we understand the fullness of our God-given purpose.

[11 : 21] To reveal God's character to the world, to the nations, as we pursue goodness, as we pursue mercy, righteousness, and justice, reflecting God's character as his image bearers, bringing God glory, and bringing us satisfaction as a result of that.

Because we are fulfilling the purpose for which our maker has created us. So contrary to what Mick Jagger would have to say, the Bible says that you can get satisfaction.

That you will get satisfaction. I think the Westminster Shorter Catechism sums it up best about our purpose in our lives.

And it says it's this, The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And I like what John Piper has to say about our purpose. He says, God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

God wants us to be satisfied. And we will get our satisfaction from him as we bring him glory. So the question now should be, How can I most glorify God?

[12 : 37] Well, the simple answer to that is, Be like Jesus. And I'll circle back to that in the end. But what I want to ask you again is, Are you really, truly pursuing that goal with your life?

Do we really see that that is our purpose? What if we've lost that view? What if we've forgotten what our purpose was?

Or is? And so that's the main point of this morning's sermon and will be for next week as well. But to help us better understand what's going on here, we've got to understand the issue that Israel is having.

Israel was supposed to be, if you remember, a light to the nations. They were supposed to reflect God's image to the rest of the world.

God's character to the world was supposed to be reflected by them. They were to direct the world's attention to God. But they rejected that purpose, if you remember, and they pursued their own ways.

[13 : 39] And as a result of that, they are reaping here the results of what they have been doing. As we've seen over the past couple of months, as we've been going through the book of Hosea, you see that the results aren't pretty when you reject God and His purpose for you.

So here's the main idea of this morning's message. Pursuing your own purpose in life will leave you dissatisfied. Pursuing God's purpose for you in life will bring you lasting satisfaction.

Pursuing your own purpose in life will leave you dissatisfied. Pursuing God's purpose for you in life will bring you lasting satisfaction. In Hosea chapter 10, verses 1 through 8, among other things, God reveals that when you disobey His purpose for your life, it will completely disorient your understanding of your material possessions, it will disorient your understanding of authority, and it will disorient your understanding of truth.

And in the end, it will leave you in a state of perpetual dissatisfaction. So over the next couple of weeks, we are going to look at each one of those disoriented views with the goal of reorienting our understanding of our God-given purpose with the result being that we are living satisfied lives the way that God wants us to live.

So first we see pursuing your own purpose in life will disorient your understanding of your material possessions. That's exactly what's happening here with Israel. That's what God is telling to them in verses 1 and 2, that they were a luxuriant vine, that their fruit increased, but the more their fruit increased, they were using it for the things that they should not have been using it for.

[15 : 30] God describes the people of Israel like a luxuriant vine. They were prospering. These were prosperous times in which Hosea was ministering to the people of the northern kingdom of Israel.

As their bank accounts were increasing, their need for God was decreasing. And the things that they should have given to God for what was going on in their culture was misplaced and expressed in their gratitude to the idols that they worshipped instead of him.

So we understand that sin disoriented Israel's understanding of where their prosperity came from and what they were to do with it. God was the source of their prosperity.

It was God, if you remember, who called Abraham. It was God who delivered the people out of their slavery to the Egyptians. It was God who promised to give them a land flowing with milk and honey. And it was God who caused them to be victorious as they acquired that land. The people owed it all to God. Israel was instead attributing their prosperity to themselves.

[16:41] They were attributing their prosperity to their idolatrous practices. And the more they increased, the more they used that wealth to build up these altars, to build up these pillars to their false gods whom they worshipped.

This was outrageous behavior to God. Imagine, if you will, that it's been revealed that the Lottie Moon Christmas offering that we are collecting, that the SBC is collecting to give to our overseas missionaries, say it was revealed that all of that collection was instead being given by our SBC higher-ups to Planned Parenthood.

Or say that it came to the realization that they were taking all that money and they were using it to buy white, short-sleeved collared shirts and black ties that they were going to give to the Mormons to continue on their missionary work, right?

We would say, those people got to get fired, correct? And rightfully so. That's a misappropriation of the resources and what they were intended to be used for.

Israel had a history of doing this, though. Forgetting who the source of their prosperity was and thinking they could do with it whatever they wanted to do. Exodus chapter 3, verses 20 through 22.

[17:59] God tells them, so I will stretch out my hand, I will strike Egypt with all the wonders I will do in it. And after that, he will let you go. And I will give the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians.

When you go, while there are still slaves, he's telling them this, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor and any woman who lives in her house for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing.

You shall put them on your sons and your daughters so you shall plunder the Egyptians. Then later on in Exodus 12, 33 through 36, after God has delivered them out of slavery, look at what they do with some of that prosperity that he gave to them.

The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste for they said, we shall all be dead. So the people took their dough before it was leavened and kneaded bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders.

The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them for they asked the Egyptians for silver and gold and jewelry for clothing and the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians so that they let them have what they asked.

[19:06] Thus they plundered the Egyptians. So I made a mistake. Before they had left, on their way out, what God said that they would do is what happened. As they go out, they ask for these things and the Egyptians are glad to give it to them.

They were slaves in Egypt. They had very few possessions. And here we see that God delivers them from their slavery and he increases their wealth as he escorts them out of this land.

Now, this was not stealing. For one, remember, they asked the Egyptians for these things and they were happy to give it to them because they wanted these people out of their country.

Secondly, the Egyptians, if you remember, had horribly oppressed the Hebrews and had profited tremendously from their slave labor. So in a way, they were only getting back from them what was owed to them after generations of oppression.

So now we see that God has called them, that God has delivered them, that God has made them prosperous. And then we saw a few weeks ago what they did when they were out in the wilderness when they perceived that Moses was taking a little bit too long getting the Ten Commandments from God.

[20:21] They decided in his absence that they needed to take some of that gold that God had given to them and make an idol with it and then attribute to that idol the praise and the honor that was due only to God.

This is ironic to me. In Egypt, the Israelites were overlooked and underappreciated slaves. It was their hard work that produced much of Egypt's prosperity.

Then God delivers them all on his own. He sets them free and he makes them prosperous in the process. He does all the work.

But then Israel is quick to turn on him in the wilderness overlooking and underappreciating what he had done to make them prosper as a people.

So we see the Israelites' sin disoriented their understanding of the true source of their prosperity. It also disoriented their understanding of what they were supposed to do with it.

[21 : 28] What were they supposed to do with the prosperity, the riches, the wealth that God had given to them? Well, they were to give some of it back to God. They did in the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings.

And for those who ministered in that place, they were to use some of it for themselves, for their families, to help others in need. They were to use it for their God-given purpose, which was to be a light to the Gentiles.

They were to reflect God's good character to the world and use the resources that he had given them to do that very thing. And nothing has changed for us today since then.

God continues to be the source of all the things that we have and we are to continue to use those resources in ways which he has intended for us to use them.

But Israel didn't. And they would suffer the consequences of that sin. There you see in verse 2, because their heart was false, God would tear down their altars and destroy their pillars.

[22 : 33] In other words, God would put an end to the misuse of the gifts that he had given to them. So how does that apply to us today? Well, like Israel back then, sin continues to disorient our understanding of where our prosperity comes from and what we are to do with it today.

Now, you might see that and you think, well, Pastor Mike, I am not prosperous. I am not rich. I am not wealthy. That's the 1% of our society.

Well, let me tell you, compared to the rest of the world, you and I, as citizens of the United States of America, we are that 1%. We are that 1%. Each of us has something to give.

None of us is going to bed tonight starving. And if that's the case, there are plenty of people, there are plenty of places in this great land that will help you with the needs that you have.

So let's not pretend as if we are in poverty when we are so blessed to live in this country. Like Israel, then we have, though, the tendency to view our possessions.

[23 : 41] We have the tendency to view our money as being ours, as belonging to us. And so we think that we can do with those things whatever we want.

One of my favorite book series, one of my favorite series of movies, is The Lord of the Rings, written by J.R.R. Tolkien, who was a good friend of C.S. Lewis and was instrumental in leading that man to the Lord.

And in those books, he writes about a fictional kingdom of Gondor, which for many years had gone without a king. While waiting for the rightful heir to the throne to come, a series of stewards were given to be put in place to be in charge of the land.

And at the time of the events described in the book, Denethor is serving as the steward of the kingdom of Gondor. As steward of the land, Denethor has the power of the king, but he does not have the title of the king.

He is able to make decisions, he is able to pass judgments, and he receives respect, he receives admiration from the people for the important role that he plays in the king's absence.

[25 : 07] But, in all that he does, no matter how good of a job he does, he is not the king. And he never, ever will be.

And as a reminder of that, the steward is never permitted to ascend the great steps to the throne of the king, which is bejeweled, bedazzled, sparkling, and beautiful.

The steward is never allowed to ascend those steps and sit in the king's place. Instead, his place is down on the ground in a plain, black, stone chair to remind him that he is not the king, that he is on the same level as everybody else.

Denethor was not a good steward. In fact, he dreaded the day that the king would return because he knew that on that day all the authority that had temporally been given to him as steward would be gone.

and he does not want to relinquish his kingdom to its rightful owner. The choices then he makes are based upon his desire for self-preservation rather than for what is best for the kingdom.

[26 : 28] His abuse of what has been entrusted to him leads to his own corruption. He didn't want to be a steward. He wanted to be the king. Why do I use that illustration?

Well, because I think that the concept of stewardship is foreign in our culture. We understand ownership. We understand borrowing.

We understand leasing and mortgaging. But we have little knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a steward. And yet, stewardship is a crucial concept in the Bible.

and one that we ought to know well. And Denethor is an example of stewardship gone wrong. The Bible tells us that we are stewards of our time.

We are stewards of our talents. We are stewards of the treasures that have been given to us by our maker and creator. Each of us is responsible to not only understand where these things come from, but what we are to do with them.

[27 : 42] Where God has given richly much is expected in return. At no time does God give us full and final ownership of what he has given us.

We need to realize that we are but stewards. Our enemies, Satan, the world, our flesh, will try to convince us that we are king and that God acts as our steward to get us what we want.

And so people make it their purpose in life to amass wealth, to amass possessions, possessions, but Jesus tells us that if you live your life for that, you are wasting it.

You are wasting your time. Let's look at what he had to say, Luke 12, 13 through 21. Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

All he's thinking about is money, possessions, wealth. But he said to him, Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you. And he said to them, Take care.

[28 : 57] Be on your guard against all covetousness. For one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. And he told them a parable, saying, The land of a rich man produced plentifully.

And he thought to himself, What shall I do? For I have nowhere to store my crops. Not thinking about others, not thinking about what he should do, with it for God, for his glory, but only what he can do with it for himself.

And he said, I will do this. I will tear down my barns and I will build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and all my goods. And I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years.

Relax, eat, drink, be merry. But God said to him, fool, this night, your soul is required of you.

And the things you have prepared, whose will they be? Right? There are no U-Hauls following hearses. So is the one, Jesus says, who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.

[30 : 11] Mark 8, 36-37, he says it very clearly. for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, the whole entire world and all that is in it, and yet forfeit his soul?

For what can a man give in return for his soul? The answer is nothing. As creator, God has absolute rights of ownership over all things.

The Bible identifies God as owner and man as manager. As the Apostle Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 3-9, for we are God's fellow workers.

You are God's field. You are God's building. So we understand that stewardship defines our purpose in this world as assigned to us by God himself.

It is our divinely given opportunity to join with him in his redemptive work to make disciples. us. Stewardship is not God taking something from us.

[31 : 14] It is his method of bestowing his riches, his richest gifts upon his people. This is one of the ways that we fulfill our purpose in reflecting our great maker.

So how can we better do that? How can we better live as stewards? Well, first of all, God, when you give, understand that when you give, you demonstrate God's character to the world by reflecting his image to them.

As we saw in that Lottie Moon video, there's a man who was successful, had a great job and a great career, but he left it to go to the least of these who had not heard the gospel.

And I don't know, did you listen to him? It didn't sound like he had any regrets to me about doing that. And when those people see how generous those missionaries are willing to be with them, yeah, they're going to want to have to listen to what they have to say.

And they're going to believe, hopefully, that the gospel is true. We demonstrate God's character to the world when we are giving. Secondly, when you give, you are declaring that your faith and your

trust does not depend upon material possessions.

[32 : 32] Man, this one's tough, is it not? Because a lot of times when we give, we think about what we got. If I give this, can I stand to give it because do I have enough back at home?

Do I have enough back in my bank account that this isn't going to hurt too bad? But I'll tell you, when you give, you are declaring that your faith and your trust does not depend on how much you have in your bank account or how nice of a car you drive, but it declares to you and to the world that my faith and my trust is in God Almighty.

Thirdly, when you give, you gain. You gain by emptying yourself in order that God will fill you back up again to give some more.

And you've heard it said and you'll hear it again, you cannot outgive God. When you give, you're creating opportunity for him to give you more to give.

Now, don't try to play reverse psychology with God. It doesn't work, all right? It's just a little bit smarter than you are. You think, I'm going to give and then God's going to give me a lot. It's not going to work that way, right? God knows.

[33 : 45] Luke 6, 38, give and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap for with the measure you use it, it will be measured back to you.

So here's the homework that I have for you. I don't want you to just come and listen to a message and be like, yeah, I agree, I see what Pastor Mike's saying from the Bible and I agree with it. I want you to do something about this.

This week, you go do something radically generous for somebody else. I don't know what it would be, something of your time.

It doesn't have to be money, but it can be money. But you do something. You go out of your way to do something radically generous for somebody else. And when you do that, you will get that good feeling that I'm reflecting the image of my creator.

And I'm telling you, you will feel that satisfaction. And the more you do it, the more you will feel that you are fulfilling that purpose and that satisfaction will be lasting.

[34 : 56] So I want to close by sharing one last story with you. When I was a teenager, many of you have heard my testimony. I was going to go to a Nazarene youth convention with my youth group.

Growing up Nazarene, this is a big deal that they do for the teens. Every four years, they pick a major city and then they just send all the teens there. But it's expensive because the year that it was going to be for me to go was in Toronto, Canada.

So we had to fly. Plane tickets, you know, are expensive. Hotels for the week there are expensive. It's a large amount of money. And so back then it was \$800 per student to go to this trip.

And I'll tell you that at this point in my life, I was 16 and I did not want to be in church. I did not want to go with my youth group to the event. And I tried all that I could to get out of it because there's baseball tournaments going on that my team was involved in and I didn't want to go.

I told my parents, I'm not going. And I found out from them that they said, well, a man in our church, we don't know who it is, but Robert, my youth pastor, he went to Robert and you're the only guy going on the trip and he just said he wanted to pay for you to go.

[36 : 07] And so he says, if you don't go, that's your choice, but he's only going to get about half of his money back. And as self-centered as I was, as a 16 year old, I was not that self-centered that I could let that man lose \$800 because of my selfish decision.

So I went. And I'll tell you that that is the conference. That is where I was called to ministry. Can I tell you what?

I still don't know who that man is. He didn't want me to know. He didn't want to know what his right, he didn't want his left hand to know what his right was doing. As a matter of fact, before coming here to Bartlesville, just over a year ago, I met with my youth pastor, same youth pastor in that time, and I asked him, who was that?

And he wouldn't tell me. But I'll tell you, man, I am thankful for his radical act of generosity.

God knows who that man is. When we get to heaven, I don't think he can hide. I mean, I'm going to find out who it is. But you never know. You never know.

[37 : 11] When you act like God, how much God will use that to bless those around you. And I'm so thankful that that man was obedient to that purpose.

And I'm thankful for what he did for me. Now, here again, God is a giver of good gifts, is he not?
And we have a God who gave his son for us.
Didn't have to, but he did. And Jesus didn't just shed 10% of his blood. He shed it all. He gave it all.
He gave his entire life. That we could be saved from our sins. That we could have eternal life. We
have a God who is rich in grace and rich in mercy.
Thank you.