

I don't know how many of you remember the 1992 Vice Presidential debates. The candidates were Al Gore, Dan Quayle. But the one who stole the show for me was the Vice Presidential candidate for Ross Perot, Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale. Some of you might remember him. He had a week's notice that he was going to be on a national debate with two seasoned politicians, and he wanted to start off his opening statements with a way to introduce his qualifications and his experience, but it just came out the wrong way. His opening statement was two questions. "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" Now, if you watched the debate without knowing what he had planned to say afterwards but wasn't really given the chance to, you would have thought he was really questioning who he was and why he was there...but I guarantee that at one point in your life you will ask those very same questions. Who am I and why am I here?

I think people instinctively realize that there is more to life than what they are currently doing. A lot of folks begin to realize after a while just how meaningless most selfish pursuits are. I was reading this past week of a man by the name of Rafael Antonio Lozano, a 33-year-old computer programmer from Plano, Texas. His mission in life is to visit every Starbucks on the planet. Lozano, who nick-named himself Winter, began his mission in 1997, when there were 1,304 such stores worldwide. Today, there are over 6,000 in 37 countries. As of October 31st, 2005, Winter had visited 4,918 Starbucks in North America, in addition to 213 others around the globe. In an interview with USA Today, Winter said that after a while he has become realistic about the nature of his quest, saying, "As long as they keep building Starbucks, I'll never be finished." But he is also realistic about the importance of his mission. "Every time I reach a Starbucks, I feel like I've accomplished something," he said, "when actually I've accomplished nothing." A lot of folks look at their lives and think the same thing. What have I accomplished?

Most folks want their lives to have an impact, to be significant, to impact others, and to have meaning. When their life on earth is over they want to know that they made a difference. The number one selling Christian book aside from the Bible in the past few years has been a book by Rick Warren called "the Purpose Driven Life" and it is so successful, I think, because people want to know...what is the purpose of my life? Not just that, but they want to know what is God's purpose for my life. A pop musician by the name of Moby was quoted recently in a magazine as saying, "And if God made the universe and if God made us and if God made the world, it just makes sense to invite God into our lives and ask him, "You made me—what should I be doing?"

That's why a lot of folks turn to Christianity hoping that somehow they may find some sense of meaning or purpose in life. As you begin to read the bible you realize that the scriptures are filled with men and women who realized God's purpose for their lives and was used in mighty ways. Two examples are Joseph and Esther. Joseph was the second youngest son of Jacob, and Joseph began to have dreams of his family bowing down to him. Joseph's dreams were shattered however when his brothers threw him in well and then sold him into slavery. But while in Egypt, God used Joseph and elevated Joseph to second in command of all of Egypt, and when a drought came, Joseph was reunited with his family and brought them back to Egypt to live. When his brothers feared that Joseph would get even, listen to what Joseph said. In **Gen. 50:20**, Joseph said, "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*" Joseph realized that he and his life's troubles were being used for God's purpose to save many lives.

Esther is another good example. Esther was a Jewish woman who became queen when the previous queen refused to come to see the king when he wanted her. She was thus killed, and after the king sobered up he realized he needed a queen. A search was made and eventually Esther was chosen. But she was told by her cousin Mordeci to keep her nationality a secret from the king. When the King's advisor Haman came up with a plot to exterminate the Jews and he got the king to go along with it, Esther's cousin came to her saying she needed to do something about it. No doubt Esther was scared, and addressing the king without a meeting could be punishable by death, even for a queen. But listen to what Mordeci said to convince her to help. It's one of the best quotes of the bible. In **Esther 4:14**, he said, "*if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?*"

Now notice the similarities between these two. Their purpose in life was unclear of foggy at first, but when it began to become clearer, it involved some sort of struggle, suffering, or pain and courage was needed to go through with it, and for both in the end it was worth going through what they went through because God used them for a great purpose and many lives were touched because of it.

Now unlike Joseph and Esther, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ knew what His purpose was and it was clear. He must go to the cross. And in order to fulfill His purpose there would be involved great suffering and pain, and there would be a struggle, but in the end it would be worth it

because our Lord Jesus would win for us the ultimate victory...the salvation of our souls.

Now I believe that God has a purpose for each and every life here today. Phil 2:13 says, “for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” God is at work in your life to work out some great purpose He wants you to contribute to. Now I don't believe that God has every detail of our lives mapped out for us, where everything is predetermined and we have no choice in the matter. God has given us free-will. I tend to view God's plans and purpose for us less like a road map where everything is laid out for us and more like a compass that it pointing us in the right direction. This is the direction where God wants you to go and when you go that direction, God begins to use you more and more for His purpose. But heading down that direction and doing what God wants us to do is not always as easy as it sounds. At times it can be down right hard, but I want you to know that it is always worth it.

Now what I want to do is to look briefly at this passage that we read earlier, and I want us to look at the determination and courage of our Lord Jesus to accomplish what the Father had planned for Him. By doing so my prayer is that you will have a deeper appreciation of what Jesus did for us, and also that you may be encouraged to do what it is that God has called you to do. So let's look at this together.

Now as I read this passage, there was one verse that really jumped out of me, and I think it is an important one. It tells us of the struggle that Jesus had when it came to the cross. Look at vs. 27 of our text. “*Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.*” Now the hour Jesus is speaking about is the cross. Now, I don't know...but I like having the image of Jesus going to the cross without any struggle. You know, kind of the “C'mon, Let's go! Is that all you got! No Problem.” But that is not the image given.

If you look at the Garden of Gethsemane, you see the image of Jesus falling to the ground, praying so hard that His sweat was drops of blood. He prayed, “Father, if possible, let this cup pass Me by.” The cross was a struggle. It wasn't an easy cross, It was hard.

But what was it about the cross that was a struggle? Was it the pain? The pain was going to be awful for sure, but men have endured great pain without such a struggle, so it wasn't that. You know what I think it was. It wasn't the pain of the cross it was the loneliness of the cross. You see on the cross, Jesus would have to take upon Himself our sins, and by doing so Jesus would pay the penalty of those sins, which is death, and not

just physical death but a spiritual death, which is separation from God, and that meant that for the first time in all of eternity...God the Father and God the Son would be separated. Can't you hear the horror from the cross... "My God, My God...Why Have You Abandoned Me?" How awful to the think of Jesus being abandoned by God. How horrible to know that was why you were here, and that was what you must do. Jesus struggled with going to the cross. It wasn't an easy decision.

Now I wish I could say that doing what God wants you to do was always easy but the truth is that it is not. Sometimes you have to fight every natural inclination of your body to do what God wants you to do. (Illustration of woman getting out of bed) When someone upsets you, you know you ought to forgive but everything about you says you want to get even. You know that you ought to live a holy life, but with all the temptations around you it makes it so difficult to not just give in. Sometimes we look at the cost of doing what God wants us to do and we see that the cost is just to high for us. If you were to truly live your life as Jesus desires us to, what would it cost you? Would it cost you some business deals that were a little shady? Would it cost you the ridicule of your friends and family? Would it cost you, well...everything?

Now let me say that doing what God wants you to do doesn't always equate to misery. We have this misconception that if we were to truly to do what God wants us to do than we would be miserable. Often we pray, Your will be done, and then Brace yourself thinking "Here it comes." I was afraid to pray for God's choice in a wife at first because I was afraid that she was going to be ugly and boring, and God has blessed me with a beautiful wife who is vivacious and a joy to be around. Now Denise says that I'm boring and ugly.

You know, often time we are afraid to say, "Lord, Your will be done." We're afraid how God will respond. I have a cousin named Tony who is a pastor and a while back when he was still in seminary, I asked him what he thought God was calling him to do, I said, "Tony wouldn't be great if God called you to be a biblical archeologist, since you already have your degree in archeology and that is what you love to do. Tony responded, "No, I think God's going to call me to be a local pastor." "Why?" "Because that's the last thing in the world I want to be." Where do we get this train of thought from. [Jeremiah 29:11](#) says, "*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*"

Now God's will may involve temporary suffering, or delayed gratification but in the end it is always what is best and most fulfilling.

Satan will offer you instant pleasure but in the end he will destroy you. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus fell to His knees, knowing the horrors of the cross laid just hours ahead, he prayed till his sweat was like drops of blood and He prayed, “Lord, if there is any other way for this to be, may this cup pass me by. But Not My will, but Yours be done.” He knew what His purpose was, He knew it would be tough, but He knew it would be worth it.

So how can we accomplish what it is God’s will in our lives? The first thing is that we need to have an understanding of what it is God wants us to do. In Vs. 27 of our text, Jesus said, it was for this very hour I came. Jesus knew why He was here, and when you know what God’s purpose for you is, you are not just wandering aimlessly around in life.

Now the question most folks ask is how can I know what it is God wants me to do? Well, let me say that God lets you know in many ways, but we need to be careful attributing everything as God saying this is what I want. Some folks look at how the clouds are moving, or they here a song, or they immediately attribute it to God. [I read this week about a man who was looking to buy a used car but he couldn’t figure out which car to buy, so he prayed that God would help him and that night he had a dream where everything was yellow, and so the next morning, he bought the first yellow car he saw...and sure enough it was a lemon.](#)

Now if you are waiting for God to tell you exactly what it is He wants you to do you may be waiting for awhile. God doesn’t tell us everything there is to know, but he tells you what you need to know. [It is kind of like driving at night with your headlights on. If you wait to go anywhere until your headlights light the entire way home, you’ll never get anywhere, but you go as far as the light shines, and the more you move in that direction, the more that light shines the road. In the same way, God hasn’t told you every turn and route He wants you to take in life, but He has told you some general directions He wants you to follow, and when you follow those directions He reveals more and more to you. When you study God’s word, and when spend time with God, and spend time doing the things you know God already wants you to do, you begin to see what it is God wants you to do and then align yourself with that will. Max Lucado wrote, “His general will provides us with guidelines which help us understand his specific will for our individual lives.”](#)

The second thing that helps us accomplish God’s will is when we seek to accomplish something greater than your own glory. Jesus said for God to be glorified. When the Son of Man was glorified, so was the Father. Now when you are trying to determine what it is that you are to be doing, ask yourself, is this for my own glory or for God’s glory? It’s interesting that

Rick Warren starts his book off by saying first that it is not about you. How contrary is that to our thinking. It is not about you. Jesus said that if you love your life here you will lose it, but if you hate your life you will gain eternal life.

In everything you do, it is about God's glory. I try not to use illustrations that relate to preaching, because not many of you ever have to stand behind a pulpit and preach so its not to relevant, but when preaching there is a terrible temptation to seek your own glory. So in my notebook I have a prayer that in essence reminds me that it is not about me. I want to read it to you.

O God, Don't let the pulpit call me to the sermon. Let the sermon call me to the pulpit. Before I break the bread of life, Lord, break me! Wash from heart and lip the iniquity there....I want to preach, yes hemorrhage, under the divine anointing. God, strip me of all pride, all cleverness, all showmanship, and salesmanship.

Deliver me from reliance on suaveness, education, academics, personality, notes, canned quips, and celestial clichés. Let me speak with the humility of Moses, the patience of Job, the wisdom of Paul, the power of Peter, and the authority of Christ. Lord, make my preaching clear, not clever; passionate, not pitiful, urgent, not "usual", meaty, not murky.

May it comfort the disturbed, disturb the comfortable, warn the sinner, mature the saint, give hope to the discouraged, and ready fro heaven the whole audience. Let self be abased, Christ be exalted, the cross be central, and the plea be with passion. May my eyes never be dry. Just now, Lord, take me out of myself, usurp anything I've planned to say when it's in the way of your message. Here I am, Lord, I'm Your vessel! Use me for Your purpose. In Christ name, Amen.

The final thing I want to say, is what really helps you to do God's will is when you realize that it is worth it. You see, Jesus knew what His death would accomplish. He said, "When I am lifted up I will draw all men to Me." When we align ourselves with what God wants us to do, it doesn't mean that life will be easy, but you will have the knowledge and peace from knowing that you are in within God's will and you will see benefit from that, whether here or as Bro. Jackson said this week, "In the resurrection." You were created for God, you were saved by God, and you belong to God. Your it should be no surprise that your purpose should be for God. **Martin Luther King Jr**, endured a lot, and gave up a lot to fulfill what he felt God had called him to do. In a letter he wrote, he said and I quote, "The end of life is not to be happy. The end of life is not to achieve pleasure and avoid pain. The end of life is to do the will of God, come what may."

God has a purpose for your life. You may not know exactly what that purpose is, but we know that ultimately it is about a relationship with Christ and living that relationship out. At times it may be hard, but it is worth it. And I invite you this morning, with the help of God, to live out faithfully all that God has called you to do.