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FINDING YOUR PURPOSE Michael B. Beough
Jeremiah 1:4-10; Ephesians 1:11-12 February 24, 2008
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At 24, Tom Brady was the youngest quarterback in NFL history ever to win a championship. At 30, he has already won three Super Bowls and is likely to win more. Before he is through, he will likely be the greatest quarterback ever.

He seems to have it all, and people like having him around. Presidents have invited him to their annual State of the Union addresses. He has had a personal audience with the Pope. He is considered one of the most eligible bachelors in the world and is currently dating a supermodel.

On the money side, he has a \$60 million ten year contract with the New England Patriots. He is worth a lot more, but has accepted this lower amount so the team can hire other quality players to surround him. He is such a good guy that he shares the proceeds from his endorsements with his fellow players. My guess is that he takes special care of his offensive line.

Who doesn't dream of such a life? And, yet, in an interview with Steve Kroft on *60 Minutes* aired on December of 2007, Tom Brady said some surprising things.

Brady says to Kroft: *"Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what is.' I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think, 'God, it's got to be more than this.' I mean this isn't, this can't be what it's all cracked up to be."*

Kroft then asks: *"What's the answer?"*

"I wish I knew. I wish I knew," says Brady. *"I love playing football and I love being quarterback for this team. But at the same time, I think there are a lot of other parts about me that I'm trying to find."*

Have you ever wondered if this is all there is? Does your life have a purpose?

Some of you might know of Bertand Russell. A mathematician at Harvard in the early 1900's. He fervently believed this is all there is. No God. No heaven. No hell. No purpose. Just an accident of atoms coming together in a galaxy on the way to extinction. The best we can do, he said, is "whistle a pretty symphony in the dark." In other words, the only thing to worship is the best that is in man.

If not Bertrand Russell, perhaps you have heard of T. S. Eliot. Born in Missouri in 1888, lived in England from 1914 on, won the Nobel Prize for his poetry. He studied under Bertrand Russell at Harvard, but in 1927 he became a Christian, as he put it, precisely because of Russell's arid hopelessness. In "Choruses from the Rock" in 1934, Eliot warns what the world without purpose comes to:

The Lord speaks:

*A cry from the North, from the West and from the South
Whence thousands travel daily to the timekept City;
Where My Word is unspoken,
In the land of lobelias and tennis flannels
The rabbit shall burrow and the thorn revisit,
The nettle shall flourish on the gravel court,
And the wind shall say: 'Here were decent godless people:
Their only monument the asphalt road
And a thousand lost golf balls'.*

Eliot was not concerned about the extinction of our galaxy. He was concerned about the extinction of the human soul and human society.

Does human life have a purpose? Is there a purpose for your life? Or is this all there is?

We have decided as a congregation that a part of our Core Message is that there is a purpose for every life. It is a purpose that goes beyond our intentions or our jobs or our families. It is a cosmic purpose, an eternal purpose, a divine purpose. The purpose we want to share with others is one that comes only from God.

I love the way it says it in Ephesians 1:11-12. *Long before we ever heard of Christ, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living.* "Glorious living", that is what we are made for. About 400 years ago, John Calvin said it this way: *The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.* We would say "the chief end of humans".

So what are the elements of this glorious living God designed us for?

To begin with, **God designed us to worship our Creator.** Now, I do not mean God created us to attend worship services. That is important to do and even essential if we hope to live with purpose.

What I mean is God designed us to live a worshipful life, to live in the conscious awareness of the presence, love, and power of God on a daily basis. To live in relationship with God since He made us for Himself. To pray. To see the hand of God at work. To thank Him. To praise Him. Especially for our redemption in Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah 1:4-10 is a good model of the elements of glorious living. Look at what God says in verse 5. "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.*" In other words, Jeremiah, let's get something straight from the beginning. You existed in my heart and in my plans even before the first cell of you existed in your mother's womb. I have plans for you! Can you imagine living daily with that on your mind? Before you were even one cell old, God knew you. Doesn't that make you want to fall down in complete awe and thanksgiving before God?

I happen to agree with Rick Warren in *The Purpose Driven Life*. "It is not about us." It is about God. Our purpose comes from God. We cannot create a big enough purpose to sustain our lives, one that calls forth the enormous potential God sees in each of us. We get in trouble when we try. Worship helps us keep our eye on the One who keeps His eye on us.

God also designed us to grow up in a particular way. The Bible calls it growing up in Christ, or maturing in Christ.

Look again at Jeremiah 1, verses 6-8. God has plans for the prophet, but he complains that he is only a boy. *Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.* God tells Jeremiah to grow up. "*Do not say, 'I am only a boy'.*"

I think a lot of people think of church as just a boring place where people sit around acting nice, or condemning you if you don't act nice. Some churches might be like that.

The good news is that God did not create us just to sit around in church acting nice and reading nice Bible stories and doing boring things. God created us to grow and develop and mature as life-breathing agents of His kingdom on earth. To do that, we must learn the ways of Christ. To develop the character of Christ. To do the work that Christ does. It is a seismic shift, a transformation, a renovation of one's heart and soul. We call it making and growing disciples who give their lives to make a difference in the world.

Let me tell you from experience that that doesn't come easy. Growing up in Christ takes work and requires the help of others. Is it worth it? We think so. And we want others to experience the kind of inward joy that comes in knowing you are on a good and powerful path with eternal consequences.

Why go to the trouble? **Because God designed us to make a difference in the world.** Did you know that God loves the world? That is why God messed with Jeremiah to get him on the right path. In verses 9-10, Jeremiah discovers what God wants with him: to pull down the old and build the new.

If I had written Rick Warren's book, I would have called it *The Mission Driven Life*. Our purpose is to live a mission driven life. God has a mission for every one of us. Whatever your specific mission might be, all our missions from God seek to accomplish the same thing. To make a difference in the world. To lift up the fallen. To heal the hurting. To reconcile the divided. To help the lost find the way. To introduce the madding crowds to the peace, purpose, and promise of Christ.

Look at our Core Message. "Peace. Purpose. Promise." Think of it this way. I got this idea from Amber when she gave her testimony at the Upward Basketball half-times. Our purpose is to make peace. We experience peace as we know and fulfill our purpose and rely on the promises of God.

Our purpose is not to do a mission. It is to become *missional* as a core value of our lives. It is not about us. It is about God and God's love for the whole world, so much that He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.

So does knowing Christ really make any difference?

Here is a true story told to me by John Allen, our campaign consultant. The man whose story this is is telling it this morning in John's church.

The one thing this man wanted more than anything else was to become a vice-president for Texas Instruments, if not the CEO. This is what he lived for. It is what he worked for. It is what he sacrificed his family for. It was his purpose in life. Until he crashed. Two weeks in a psych hospital. A total breakdown.

The funny thing is that his son began having behavior problems at home and school with falling grades, and so dad naturally thought it was the son who needed help. He got counseling for his son. Then one day the counselor said she wanted to speak with the father. She showed him a drawing completed by his son. On it was a very tall stick figure. Next to the stick figure was a telephone. Next to that a cell phone. Next to that a computer. And next to the computer another stick figure, tiny in comparison to everything else. The counselor asked the boy to explain his picture to his father. He pointed to the big stick figure and said, "That is my dad." He explained each of the objects and then pointed to the tiny stick figure and said, "That's me. When dad comes home, he is always working. Even when he is with me and the phone rings, he leaves me."

The father's heart broke. Over the next year and a half, he stopped bringing his work home with him. He made time for his church and for his family. Oddly enough, he started getting commendations from his boss for the great work he was doing. Then it happened. He was offered a vice-president's position at TI. It wasn't as important as it once was. His goals had changed. He agreed to accept the position only if it did not interfere with

his church life and family time. He had discovered his purpose in life. Here is what he told John Allen. He had discovered that his reason for working so hard to become vice-president was because of his fear of being a failure in the way the world measures success. Now he knows that it is God first, then family, and then work.

Here are the benefits of knowing our purpose: Focus, peace, eternal life here and now! It is in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for.

Worship, grow, go – glorious living!