

Scripture: Matthews 20:20-28
Sermon title: <Hope for the flowers>
Translated by Min-Jun Hur

1.

Do you have a goal in life? Let me ask our children here. Do you have goals in life? What kind of person do you want to be? Let's make it simple. All of you are studying so hard. Why are you studying? Why do you read books? Many people study to get into a good university. So why do we have to go to a good university? Do you need to go to a good college to get a good job? So what's the point of having a good job? People say when you have a good job, you are more likely to make a lot of money. So what's the point of making a lot of money? To buy whatever I want?

You may say, "I want to ride a nice car. When I have a lot of money, I can buy a nice house and anything I want." So, can you say that your goal in life is to be number one and to make millions of dollars? Of course, many good things will happen to you if you study well and be number one.

Most of all, your parents will be proud of you. Once I was walking around with a Stanford University hoodie that my friend gifted me. Someone came up to me and said, "Your parents must be proud of you."

Now let me ask our parents here. Do you have goals for your children? Who do you want your kids to be? Many parents wish similar things for their children. "I want my child to be at the top. We want our children to grow up and become influential in the world." We want our children to influence others by achieving high social status and accumulating wealth.

Adults in the crowd, have you found a meaning and purpose in life? Surviving the competition to reach a higher position may not be that meaningful, but we certainly do not want to lose the competition either.

2.

Zebedee's wife had two sons, James and John. She wanted her sons to become great men and hold the highest positions. But her sons didn't go to a good college. Instead, they were fishermen at the Sea of Galilee. When she heard that Jesus was going into Jerusalem after three years of ministry in Galilee, she thought that finally Jesus was going to become a king. She became very excited and decided to go to Jesus and ask, "When you become the king, could you let James and John have the next two highest positions?" This was an outright foul. The other ten disciples got furious. They started to swear and fight with each other.

Jesus intervenes here and decides to tell his disciples something important, since the disciples did not seem to understand the purpose of Jesus' going to Jerusalem. What do you think is His purpose in entering Jerusalem? I will give you two choices.

- 1) To be number one and to sit in the highest place.
- 2) To be the last out of all people and become a servant of others.

Choice number 2 is the correct answer. This was also the purpose and meaning of Jesus' entire life. This was why Jesus came to this earth.

I will ask the parents here. If the purpose of your child's life is to fall behind others and become a servant to others, how would you feel? Jesus says, "Whoever wants to be a great man (Mega) among you must be a helper (diaconos). If anyone wants to be number one (protos) among you, he must be a servant (dulos)." Will you feel great if your children become helpers and servants of others? Deep down we might feel like it is our loss. Still we prefer our children be the head rather than the tail.

3.

We humans get our energy from finding a meaning. Nothing makes people more depressed than doing meaningless work. Let's say someone gives you a shovel and tells you to dig a puddle. How would you feel if that same person tells you to fill the puddle up again after you dig about two feet? Are you going to lose your temper? You might be disheartened, since digging and filling it again do not seem to make any sense!

Let's say you study really hard and go to a good college and get a good job. But if you do not find the purpose of your life, wouldn't that be a miserable life? In contrast, if you realize the meaning of life, your life will be more valuable than anyone's.

So, when do we find purpose in our lives? We are made to find this when we help and serve others. When we do things for ourselves, there may be joy, but it is difficult to feel fulfilled and satisfied. Man is a being made in the image of God. Since God is relational, we are created to find the meaning of life when we connect with other people.

To our youngest crowd, your moms went through tough times when giving birth to you. They went through even tougher times when they were raising you. Although you didn't follow the directions, your moms were happy raising you. They felt rewarded and found their lives' meanings as they helped and served you. The same goes for your lives. When we help and serve others, we find our purpose in life.

4.

Let me tell you a story. Once upon a time, there was a tiger caterpillar who was eating the leaves and living happily. One day, the caterpillar thought, "maybe life is not all about eating and growing." Life was too boring. So he went down under the tree. And he found a strange column. It was wriggling. Looking closely, he saw that the column was a pile of caterpillars and everyone was trying to climb to the top. But the top was obscured by clouds. He did not see anything up there, but since all the other caterpillars were climbing it, he decided to climb it also. But that was not as easy as he thought. He had to step on other caterpillars to climb. It is either he steps on others or he would be stepped on. The caterpillars were not friends. They were just threats and obstacles to each other.

This story is from the book called "Hope for the flowers." Do you think this tiger caterpillar climbed up to the top? Yes, he finally made it. But what was at the top? There was nothing. At the top, the caterpillar heard the other caterpillars talking.

"There is nothing here."

"Quiet, you idiot. The other kids will listen. We're where they want to be. We are here."

"Look over there, there's another pillar over there. There are pillars all over the place."

Listening to this, the tiger caterpillar got upset. He got ahead of others, but in the end, he didn't find any meaning. However, he found that his friend, the yellow caterpillar, who cared for and loved him, transformed into a butterfly. He decided to go down the pole. Eventually, with the help of the yellow butterfly, he became a cocoon. And as a butterfly, he discovered the meaning of life.

This is how the yellow caterpillar described what becoming a butterfly is.

"Butterflies fly with their beautiful wings, connecting the earth and the sky. Butterflies drink the nectar from flowers and carry seeds of love from flower to flower. Without butterflies, the flowers will soon disappear from this world!" Butterflies were the ones that brought hope to the flowers.

5.

We realize our meaning of life when we serve others. The word "servant" may make some people uncomfortable. When you're ahead of others, honestly, there seem to be a lot of good things that come with that status. We tend to compare ourselves to others and feel like we are falling behind if we do not do the

things others do. At the same time, we want to be different from others in some ways. We want to have something better or go to a better university. We want to look more special by having what other people do not have.

However, comparing our lives to others' is foolish. Don't compare, live your life. If someone else is a little ahead of you, just let it go. Everyone's pace of life is different. There is someone who loves books, and there is someone who hates books but is born to love sports. There is no need to compare because everyone is different.

The true meaning and happiness of life cannot be obtained by comparing ourselves with others. Rather, we get this when we connect with and hold hands with others. Seeing the laughter of those who have been helped by us makes us feel truly rewarded.

As the tiger caterpillar was reborn as a butterfly, he realized the meaning of his life anew. He had to go into a pupa and die, in order to be reborn. We also need to believe in Jesus Christ and die with Jesus. Otherwise, we can never be born again into a new person. If we do not die with Jesus and do not live with Jesus, we will lead our lives in the same way as the rest of the world does. When we are born again as children of God, we will gain different perspectives. We will be able to live freely without comparing ourselves to others. We will also learn how to be happy even at the bottom. While carrying the cross, Jesus was happy since he knew many people would find true freedom through the cross. He asks us to live a life that sets others free.

Everyone in the world can be a flower. When we approach someone, call his name and hold his hand, he becomes a flower. All of us are called to be butterflies. We are called to bring meanings to the lives of the flowers. Those who do not know Jesus yet do not know where they are going, and they only try to get ahead and trample other people. If we as butterflies connect their lives with God, they will be able to find purpose and meaning in their lives just like we do. We will close with verses Matthews 20:26-28.

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”