

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
February 7, 2021

"Jesus' purpose driven life drives ours" (Mark 1:38)

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LSB 580

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this 5th Sunday after Epiphany, is from our reading from Mark 1:38.

“But He said to them, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.”

Here ends our text.

Jesus came for a singular purpose. He descended from heaven with but one purpose – to save all mankind by His suffering, death and resurrection. He was laser focused, driven, and committed to the singular purpose of preaching this message of Good News from city to city. He had to go to the next city, and the next...He had to tell all sinners that the kingdom of heaven was near. The Messiah, He Himself, had come!

Oh, Jesus would not be deterred from His mission. We’ll begin the Lenten season on the 17th in ten days, remembering how we have failed in our mission to be completely purposeful in our lives of loving God with all our heart mind and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves. The ashes to ashes are a stark reminder of our sinful mortality. But the ashes placed on our foreheads in the sign of the cross, remind us that there was One who succeeded in His purpose of carrying the sins of all people to the cross, enduring the shame and paying our debt with His precious blood.

Jesus’ purpose driven life saves our aimless, sinful lives. Yes, we’ll begin the Lenten season in 10 days hearing again how Jesus was driven by the Holy Spirit into the desert after His baptism and was tempted by the devil 40 days and 40 nights. His purpose was to succeed for all of us who have fallen to temptation.

Jesus forced His body to fast that entire time to combat the evil that was trying to distract Him from completing His mission of saving the world. Pastor Goetz will

be leading a midweek Lenten preaching series titled “Were you there when...” to help us remember how Jesus was faithful to God in His passion to save us who in our weaknesses have fallen away.

Today, the pinnacle of sporting competition will take place to determine who is more driven and focused to win. Athletes have prepared for the Super Bowl with extreme strength training and dieting. We’re fascinated at how purposeful people can be to win a perishable crown. The quarterback for one team, Tom Brady pushes himself at age 43 to win again, when most men retire from the sport in their 30’s.

Sports lore has titled an amazing comeback effort led by John Elway in 1987 as “The Drive”. In the 1987 AFC championship game between the Denver Broncos and the Cleveland Browns. John Elway led his team to an overtime victory with a drive tying touchdown with 37 seconds left in the game. Maybe we’ll be treated to something similar today with our brats and beer?

Yes, Paul recognizes this sporting dedication in Scripture in 1 Corinthians 9:25.

“And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”

“But we an imperishable.” Paul continues in the next verse to remind us what our Christian purpose and prize in life is that must not be lost.

“Therefore, I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

Ah... not everyone wins the imperishable prize. There are those who will be disqualified. Yes, there will be one team who doesn’t hoist the Lombardi Trophy tonight and pass it around for all kiss it. We’ll see if Covid has changed this tradition. But for the losers of the perishable crown life goes on. Always next year...until there are no next years.

But for those who are disqualified from winning the imperishable wreath of eternal victory in heaven, life does not go on...not in heaven, that is. But in hell.

Paul continues in the next chapter, 1 Corinthians 10 to remind us what happened to the losers who spent 40 years in the desert wandering aimlessly.

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.”

If you watch the Super Bowl, you’ll probably see a few commercials that promise to make your life more purposeful. There might be a few truck commercials by the company claiming to have the better truck. Drive a Ford or a Chevy or a Ram to make your life more purposeful. Ford has set up a scholarship program called “Driving Dreams”. It aims to help youth be purposeful for those who want to go on to college.

What has driven your life and given purpose and meaning to it? What continues to motivate you? For some the goal is to be the best doctor, nurse, teacher, farmer, musician, parent, husband or wife. For most people, the purpose in life is to work hard so in order to retire. But, what next?

Paul poses the question in 1 Corinthians 15.

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen....17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”

But we are gathered here today in God’s house, because we know that life does go on beyond retirement. There is a resurrection, and, like Paul, we don’t want to be disqualified from it! We gather here today to drink the spiritual drink of the Rock that leads and follows us – Christ. We gather to receive especially the very body and blood of Christ for our forgiveness.

So Paul exclaims, **“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”**

A life driven without Jesus is a life of vanity. It has no purpose but is driven by the wind and whatever popular thinking of the day is being preached.

“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”
3 What profit has a man from all his labor In which he toils under the sun?
4 One generation passes away, and another generation comes; There is no remembrance of former things, Nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come By those who will come after. (Ecclesiastes 1:1-4, 11)

We try hard to preserve legacies in this life. Peyton Manning will be inducted in the Football Hall of Fame this year. There are many lifetime achievement awards and trophies and halls of fame for all the different professions.

And yet we heard in our Old Testament reading from Isaiah 40, **“Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall,”**

A favorite actor of mine, Christopher Plumer also died this week at age 91. He was well known for his role as Captain Von Trapp in the Sound of Music. In the movie, he drove his children to be more purposeful and disciplined. He even had a whistle sound for each of them. Yet, as the movie progressed, you remember how he learned that being a good father wasn't just about disciplining his children but expressing his care for them.

God, our heavenly Father, not only disciplines us whom He loves, but lifts us up who are weary and unable to finish the race. Lest we be disqualified, God tells us,

“31 But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they 9 shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

And this is only possible because Jesus came from heaven to run the perfect race for us and be the perfect sacrifice for us. Psalm 40 tells us Jesus very words spoken to His Father and also quoted in Hebrews 10.

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.7 Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. 8 I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart.”

Jesus became the sacrifice to end all sacrificing by offering Himself up on the altar of the cross. This was the Super Bowl of Super Bowls! This was the victory of victories for all who wait on the Lord in faith. His victory becomes your victory!

You run stronger than any football player who takes the field this afternoon, for you run in Christ who strengthens you! (Philippians 4:13)

Jesus singular purpose becomes your singular purpose through baptism. You are united to His death and resurrection and led by the Holy Spirit to remain faithful unto death and receive the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10).

Your purpose in life is two-fold just like Paul's. To preach Christ crucified and not be disqualified after you have proclaimed the Good News to others. Dale Moehring will again make a profession of his faith before God and this congregation of his trust in the Lord and pledge to continue the good fight with us until God calls us home and gives to us the imperishable crown!

For this purpose, we have been called through the living word of God. Thanks be to God for Jesus' completing the Father's will perfectly for us! He was purpose driven to love us even unto to His death, and rise again in victory.

So, Psalm 40 speaks the very words of Jesus of how His message of salvation has purposely reached us.

I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness

In the great assembly;

Indeed, I do not restrain my lips,

O Lord, You Yourself know.

10 I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart;

I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation;

I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth

From the great assembly.

From city to city, Jesus went preaching the Good News that He has come to be the world's Savior. And this Good News comes to our city today also. Yes, we're hosting the Super Bowl of Super Bowls here in Mercedes...wherever the Good News is preached! We're hosting it, and we're competing in it, and Jesus has won the imperishable crown for you! We're on the winning team! It's your trophy of eternal life through faith in Him. All glory to God! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)