

Title: Renewing Our Purpose
Date: September 26, 2021
Subject: Renewal of purpose keeps us focused on what the Lord wants
Scripture: Philippians 2:1 – 13; Luke 19:10; Ephesians 2:10

Our English language has never met a word it didn't like. It grabs them from other languages and claims them. And it seems to make up new words by adding a prefix to something that wasn't already a word. There are some that use existing words. Add RE in front of new to make *renew*. Something had been new and it's going to be made new again. Add RE to fresh to make *refresh*. Add RE to invigorate to make *reinvigorate*.

I thought I was on to our language's tricks. I felt confident I had them with rejuvenate. Remove the RE and come up with *juvenate*. No way that's a word. Wait a second. The Urban Dictionary says it means: "To re-energize yourself before losing any initial energy or vigor you had beforehand." Also, they say it's "the ultimate term used in place of the word sleep." Tell the kids it's time to rejuvenate.

I tried another. Take the RE off renovate -- novate. Can't be a word. Wrong again. To novate is to substitute a new contract for an old one or replace a party in a contract with another party. It has a connection with real estate. Renovating homes is replacing old with new. In one sense, renovate is redundant since novate is replacing something with something new, then renovate is replacing the new with that more new. It's a picture of how we're to live our spiritual lives. Keep on renovating. All these words -- refresh, reinvigorate, rejuvenate, renovate -- fit with being renewed.

Our theme this morning is to be renewed in purpose. Purpose can be thought of as the reason we get up in the morning. It's the pursuit of doing something meaningful. It's why we exist.

Some wander through life without a sense of purpose. Many look for "their" special purpose, their personal calling, the key that will unlock the door...a job, a cause, something that will make them fulfilled. Some pursue purpose through partying, money, popularity, or relationships. Some express their purpose through a phrase often attributed to one Hollywood heart throb or another (James Dean, John Derek said the line in a movie): "Live fast, die young, and have a good-looking corpse." The idea is to get all they can in this life because nothing else matters. The sentiment ignores and disregards the afterlife. It's shortsighted.

Jobs, college choice, location, family are important but they're supplemental purposes to our God given purpose. As we look at our purpose, we begin with the Scripture read earlier - Philippians 2.

1. Be like Jesus

The opening verses of the chapter are a series of statements about potentiality. REREAD v. 1. The *ifs* are to be understood in the sense of if these things are true and they are. The teaching is about what we possess in our relationship with Christ and because of it. Since these are the facts of life, then what?

Possession isn't the main concern. Rather it's what's we do with what we possess. Paul asks that his joy would be made complete. We can rightly conclude it also makes God's joy complete since he's the one who

directed Paul to write these words. Joy is made complete through being unified expressed through being like-minded, having the same love, and being one in spirit and purpose. This is fleshed out through the rest of the passage. Verses 3 and 4 state the need to be others oriented and not be selfish.

The Example of examples is provided in v. 5. REREAD v. 5. Jesus didn't seek to retain all the status and privileges of being God. Instead of being served, he sought to serve. This led to him entering the world to serve people through taking on a human form. When the disciples were muscling for the power positions, Jesus rebuked them and taught that his followers shouldn't be like leaders who seek to use their power, authority and influence to dominate others. He stated his mission: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Jesus further humbled himself to experience the humiliation and torture of public crucifixion. This again was done to serve people because people couldn't die for themselves and pay the sufficient payment owed to God for their sins. Jesus took our place.

After the Savior served in this way, he was elevated and will yet be. After death, he resumed his position as God to sit at the right hand of the Father. In the coming ages, everyone, those who've placed their trust in him to be their Savior and those who've rejected him, all will bow before him to acknowledge his supremacy.

Our attitude is to be the same as that of Jesus Christ and follow his purpose in coming to earth. He sought to serve. Therefore, we're to have the attitude and action of serving others. This contrasts with what humanity pushes - others are to serve us. It's all about self: "What can I get? What's in it for me? How will this help improve my status and power?" They take their cues from the famous theologian Miss Piggy whose life is all about her and is known for saying, "For moi?"

It's true that we're to take care of the things that are necessary in our lives. But that's not to be the overriding, all-encompassing drive. We're also to be concerned about other people to meet their needs and interests. Jesus served by giving of himself.

Renewing our purpose begins with desiring to be like Jesus. Another term is disciple or follower. Stuart Briscoe was at a Bible study for college students. The group introduced themselves by giving their name, major and something about themselves. It was all pretty cut and dried until one young woman gave her name and then said, "I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ cleverly disguised as a college student." She hit the nail on the head. Her primary identity was as a follower of Jesus.

The closing declaration made by Jesus in the story of Zacchaeus is instructive. It describes one of the ways Jesus served people. READ Luke 19:10.

2. Engaged in evangelism

Jesus primary interest in coming to earth was to find people who were lost and save them. In one sense it was easy because everybody is lost without Jesus. People can't find their way to God by themselves no matter what they try. Jesus is the seeker of people so he can show them the way to the Father. He said nobody can get to the Father except through him because he is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).

We're to follow in the Lord's footsteps. We can't save people but we can bring them to the One who can. We're to seek those who are lost. All people are lost if they haven't come to the place where understand the meaning of Christ's actions on the cross and put their personal trust and confidence in what he has done.

Seeking is looking for people. We're to be on a manhunt, a woman hunt, on the lookout for them.

This past week daughter Tiffani and family couldn't find their TV remote. They instigated a search of all the usual places - between the couch cushions, on the TV stand. Didn't find it. They suspected not quite 2 year old Laynie had a hand in it disappearing so they started looking in places where she has put stuff before - the garbage, the toilet... Nope. Tiff and Mark offered a reward to the one who found it. No success. Finally, the remote was discovered in a pair of Mark's jeans on their bedroom floor. They figured Laynie somehow put the remote there. I don't know about that.

They were seeking. They were actively looking. We are to be seeking and actively looking for people who need to know Jesus. The disheartening thing to me is that, while it's obvious there are people who are lost all around us, I'm not looking or thinking about looking the way I should. Why aren't we seeking? Why am I not seeking?

Lack of knowledge of what to say. I heard an amazing statistic about how many Christians wouldn't be able to tell a person how to find Jesus as their Savior. It was way over 90%. They wouldn't be able to explain the good news of the gospel. Make sure we know the basics. Share our story of what Jesus has done for us.

Think we have to lead people to Jesus each time. Only God can change a person. Our role is to put a stone in someone's shoe, give them something to think about and help them move closer to putting their trust in Jesus. Maybe we'll be there when they give their life to Jesus. Maybe we won't. One more piece in the puzzle.

We don't care. That's a hard one to admit. What do we do? Pray. Think about the eternal destiny of those without Christ.

I've looked for opportunities. Sometimes I get calls or emails at church from people wondering about the church where I'm able to share. Sometimes I give tracts to salesmen who stop in. I've recently shared a book and tract with a man. Had previous conversations with him including about the term "born again." In the most recent conversation he asked if I had suggestions that would help him when it was his turn to share devotions for a group that does building projects for churches and camps. Somehow he'd gotten connected with the evangelical group and has gone on a couple trips. Prayed for him. Later I contacted him when I heard a family member was in an accident and told him I was praying.

Sometimes attempts get short-circuited when people find out I'm a pastor. I've had people quickly tell me where they go to church and they're comfortable with their church. Basically, they don't want to be bothered about church or anything I might say.

Sowing and harvesting can be tough work. Ask any farmer or gardener - they have to deal with weather, pests, weeds, weather. The farmer keeps planting and working toward the harvest. Jesus likened people to a harvest field (John 4:35, 36). He implored his disciples to look at the fields because they're ripe for harvest.

Jesus wants us to look, not only look, but get involved in reaping. He promises that those who are involved in the harvesting the crop for eternal life, whether they're sowing or harvesting, will be paid their due wages.

C. S. Lewis, "The glory of God, and, as our only means to glorifying Him, the salvation of human souls, is the real business of life."

Another way we copy Jesus and his service is by...

3. Doing good works. Scripture informs us Jesus went around doing good (Acts 10:38).

Please turn to Ephesians 2:10. READ.

The lead up to this verse is a description of the salvation process. God possesses great love, an abundance of mercy, and incredible grace. Jesus Christ came so that we might be saved. We achieved nothing of our salvation. There's nothing we could do to earn it. The only part we had in affecting of our salvation is we had to be sinners, people who were dead to God because of sin. God's eternal rescue plan raised us from the dead and gave us new life in Jesus Christ.

There's a show on HGTV called "No Demo Reno." The premise is renovating homes without engaging in any demolition but simply spruce up the place – slap up some paint, install new flooring. They actually do some demolition but not massive ones of tearing the whole house down to the studs. The show should be called "Some demo but as little as possible and only what is needed" but that's not a catchy title.

When it comes to our spiritual lives, we were a full demo reno. There was nothing righteous in us. We were complete sinners. Everything needed to be demolished. Then Jesus gave us new life.

That's not the end of the salvation process as v. 10 informs us we were created for a purpose. Genesis 1 tells us people are created in the image of God. He specially made us with abilities, talents, skills, resources and weakness (that need to be overcome). Ephesians speaks of being created through our connection with Jesus, our re-creation. This took place when we placed our trust in Jesus Christ to be our Savior. We're also called God's workmanship. There's only one other use of this term in the New Testament (Romans 1:20) where it speaks of God's work of creating the world. Workmanship means we're God's masterpiece, his work of art, his handiwork. The purpose for being created in Christ and being his workmanship is to do good works.

To be crystal clear, good works have no role in achieving salvation. They do have a role in fleshing it out. John Calvin, instrumental in the Reformation said, "It is faith alone that justifies, but the faith that justifies is not alone." It's like the relationship between thunder and lightning. We see the flash of lightning and have to wait for the thunder as sound travels slower than light. Thunder follows lightning but adds nothing to it. The same is true with works and faith. Works follow faith but add nothing to it.

We can follow this theme to the book of Titus. READ 2:11 - 14.

God's grace brings salvation and teaches us how we're to live - saying "no" to the things that don't please God like ungodliness and following worldly passions. It also teaches us to say "yes" to self-control, uprightness and godly lives. Jesus Christ sacrificed himself to redeem us from all wickedness and purify us as

his own people in preparation for his return. The last clause brings us to the purpose, our purpose - that we would be a people eager to do what is good.

The emphasis on doing what is good is found in more places in Titus. Back up to 2:7. READ. Titus, a young pastor, was to be an example of doing what was good by being engaged in good works.

There are three more places in chapter 3. READ 3:1, 8, 14.

Followers of Jesus Christ are to be eager to do what is good, be zealous in it, totally committed, enthusiastic in doing good works. John Wesley reportedly said, "Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the souls you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal you can, as long as ever you can." Doing good works is showing kindness to neighbors, helping strangers, being courteous to business associates. It's how we talk, act and react to people. The Bible gives lots of principles, standards commands about how we're to interact with one another and how we care for the needs of people, yes, the spiritual needs, but also physical needs like food, shelter, and clothing (James 2:14 - 17; Matthew 25:31 - 44).

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus calls his followers the light of the world. He uses humor to point out we don't turn on a light and then cover it up. That totally defeats the purpose. He said, "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). We're the electricity that turns on the light. Our good works shine in the room which is the people around us. We aren't to get the credit. That goes to God the Father who is the producer of the electricity of which we are only a conduit.

A lot of people, including Christ followers, invest their time, energy, attention, and affection into things that won't matter in the end. Matthew West expresses this in his song "What if?"

"My biggest fear is waking up to find what matters, Is miles away from what I spent my life chasing after. Is my story gonna have the same two words in every chapter? What if?... But last I checked this heart inside my chest, Is still beating. Well I guess it's not too late. What if today's the only day I got? I don't wanna waste it if it's my last shot. No regrets, in the end, I wanna know I got no what ifs... I'm gonna dream a little bigger, Burn a little brighter, Stand a little taller, closer to Your fire, Dig a little deeper, Reach a little further, Love a little harder."

An earlier song, "The Motions," addressed the same issue. It was written when facing career threatening vocal chord surgery and during recovery. He had questions - Would he be able to sing again? Would his voice sound the same? What was his purpose in life? He concluded: "I don't wanna go through the motions. I don't wanna go one more day, Without Your all-consuming passion inside of me. I don't wanna spend my whole life asking, What if I had given everything, Instead of going through the motions?...Take me all the way." The video is worth watching ([youtube.com/watch?v=ZUg9qE_KjLg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUg9qE_KjLg)).

West needed and we need to have our sense of purpose renewed again and again and again. Lord, help us to not go through the motions but to be renewed and live our lives according his purpose of serving, sharing his Good News and doing good works.