

## SERMON TOPIC: LIVING WITH PURPOSE

### SCRIPTURE: JOSHUA 24:11-16

*<sup>11</sup> "Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands. <sup>12</sup> I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow. <sup>13</sup> So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.'*

*<sup>14</sup> "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. <sup>15</sup> But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."*

*<sup>16</sup> Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods!"*

## INTRODUCTION

A man walked past a building construction site, and wondered what they were building. He approached 3 construction workers who were busy doing their work and asked, "What are you doing?" The first man replied, "I am laying some bricks." The second man smiled, "I am earning a living." The third man waited a moment and then said simply, "I'm building a grand cathedral."

The three construction workers were working on the same project, but they each perceived their work differently. Their individual perspectives would inevitably result in different levels of motivation, commitment and types of results.

This analogy applies to us. What are we doing with our lives? Are we making money, going through the mundane tasks of everyday living or are we living our lives with a purpose?

In the parable of the Wise and Foolish Builder, Jesus explicitly warned his audience about the importance of establishing a strong life purpose (Luke 6: 46-49). The parable is simple

to understand. Obeying and practicing the teachings of Christ will establish a purposeful life. Jesus said, **“Hear my word and put them into practice.”** In the same manner, one must live his life according to the purpose of God, in order to live a meaningful life. Rick Warren says, **“Living on purpose is the only way to really live. Everything else is just existing.”** It is disturbing that many Christians still choose to live their lives outside the “blueprint” of God’s established purpose and will.

What is this “purpose of God” that we are talking about? King Solomon in “Ecclesiastes”, in his long discourse on the futility of life came to a definitive conclusion of life’s purpose in Ecclesiastes 12:13, **“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”**

## TRANSITION

Joshua had lived a life of significance and purpose. A powerful eulogy was written to describe his spiritual fitness and leadership: **“Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel.”** (Joshua 24:31) That was how Joshua lived his life!

## OUTLINE

How do we live a life of purpose? From Joshua’s life example, we learn three key principles and decisions to be made:

### #1: **It is a CHOICE YOU MAKE**

**“...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”** (Joshua 24:15)

To live a life of purpose is a personal choice to be made with a willing mind. It is a choice to serve God’s purpose amongst other attractive worldly options. Jesus says that the Father seeks only such persons to worship him in spirit and in truth. The carnal mind of man, which is enmity against God, is not capable of such spiritual worship.

We live in a pluralistic, materialistic and self-promoting culture, where worldly options are inherent. We could either live as mere earthlings indulging in sensual pleasures, materialistic pursuits and dance to its tempting biddings, or we could choose to live with

godly purpose and obey the commands of God. Opposing worldly values pose constant challenges to ours. However, we are to also remember the scriptural injunction that even though we are in the world, we are not to be of the world. **“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – does not come from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”** (I John 2: 15-17)

Spiritual indifference is a life of compromise. The challenge is to decide to live purposefully. In Joshua’s words to the people: **“Choose whom you will serve.”** The choice is plain and simple. Joshua resolved to live his life in the fear of God and serve God faithfully. If you choose to live in God’s way, you must then be willing to swim against the current of ungodliness and popular worldly beliefs. You must be discerning and not blindly follow popular worldly opinions. You must weigh your options carefully because you have a spiritual race to run and you must be disciplined to run and finish the race well.

## #2: **It is a COMMITMENT YOU KEEP**

**“Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.”**  
**(Joshua 24: 14)**

As we make resolutions and promises, we must also keep them faithfully. It is easy to pay “lip service” but the reality will soon set in to test our sincerity. The resilience of colourful idealism will persistently be put to the test by the constant grind of strenuous work, discipline maintenance, lucrative worldly offers or trials. The cost of commitment will be evaluated.

Numbers 32:11-12 testifies Joshua’s faithfulness: **“Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of the men twenty years old or more who came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they followed the Lord wholeheartedly.”**

The highlight of a marriage is often focused on the wedding service and in particular, the exchange of wedding vows by the bridal couple. However, the question of whether they will hold fast to their pledges of love and faithfulness is of grave importance since it is this that makes or breaks a marriage. Sadly, divorce rates signal an alarming increase of a lack of commitment to these pledges!

### #3: **It is a CONSEQUENCE YOU DESIRE**

Success in any field is costly, even for Christian discipleship. During World War 2, General Dwight Eisenhower said, **“There are no victories at bargain prices.”** For example, the concert pianist disciplines himself, spending long hours of practice on the piano in order to master and perform one music piece at a concert. The price may be extensively high, but he considers the rewards in return worthwhile.

Living a life of purpose has its great price too! Things of the Spirit demand an even greater devotion and price, which many Christians are unwilling to pay. Did Jesus not direct our attention to consider the price of discipleship? In Luke 14:28-33, the Lord gave us two scenarios: Will a householder begin building a tower without first having figured the cost? Will a king go to war without first considering his military strength and resources? Jesus concluded by saying that anyone who could not give up everything could not be His disciple. Thus, living a godly purposeful life has a costly price tag! Yet, many Christians ignore this Scriptural demand.

If we choose to progress spiritually, we must separate ourselves unto the things of God and concentrate upon them to the exclusion of a thousand things the worldly man considers important. We must cultivate godliness in the spiritual disciplines. We must make the kingdom of God the sphere of our activities. We must labour in it like a farmer in his field, like a miner in the earth. We must purpose to live God’s blueprint!

### **CONCLUSION**

Acts 13:36 says **“David served God’s purpose in his generation...”** King David is also known as **“a man after God’s own heart.”** He dedicated his life to fulfill God’s purposes on earth. In the same way, we can only serve God’s purposes in our generation. Like Queen Esther, God created you **“for such a time as this.”**

God is looking for people whom He can give his mission to. The bible says, **“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”** (2 Chronicles 19:9). Will you be a person God can use for His purpose? Will you serve God’s purpose for you in your generation? Will you be on mission with God?

To conclude with a quote from John Tillotson: **“He who provides for this life but takes no care for eternity is wise for a moment but a fool forever.”**

***Sermon Text by Rev. Vincent Goh***