

August 13, 2017 Broadway Christian Church Sermon

Hi everyone, I am so very glad to get the opportunity to share some of my experiences with you. I am thankful and joyful that God led me to this place, these people. I recently got the privilege to go back and serve my home church and share with them some of my journey away from them and ultimately, about my journey here at Broadway, and share with them how Broadway has become like a sister church to my home church, and the deep affections I have for them and their support as a grew up as a child, I share the same affections for this church after this summer. Whether we got to directly interact or not I can confidently say that you all now have a place in my heart, for when I think of this church and your works it brings me great joy.

I took this internship at Broadway because I was in search of something. Something that many people pursue, and hope to find. It is something you are all familiar with, purpose. This of course is a topic that plagues and directs the minds of many others my age as we pursue our careers and look towards the future of how we will be spending the rest of our lives. I am no expert but even as I people watch it seems like many of them are missing a sense of purpose in their work. Whether the work they do was not their first choice, or the passion that once fueled them has become just more of the same over time, or work that is so dull it couldn't possibly be for anything good, or those who work so hard for so little reimbursement that it physically and emotionally pours them out till they feel like nothing but an empty glass, and even those who have a healthy and bountiful wage, still dreading getting up in the morning. Whatever the reason may be, purpose seemed to be a rarity. At

Broadway I wanted to get closer to knowing what this whole purpose thing might looked like.

To begin let me share some of my story that makes up who I am, and remind those who already know. I'm a home grown Cairo Bearcat through and through, grew up skateboarding down main street, playing pickup games at Boney park with my friends, went to a small DOC church since I was young, of course there were patches of exploration and circumstances were I went elsewhere (like this one) but the bottom line is that I was baptized right there much like many of you might have been baptized right here. Then I went to camp as a middle and high schooler and that is where I found God and saw God's face for the first time, and myself and my friends brought that passion back with us as we continued to discover God on Wednesday nights, mission trips, service projects, lock-ins, and everything in between. While all of this was going on I was still just a typical student learning about the wonders of the world through education as well as learning about myself, which is how I came to discover my passion for music. As my high school chapter was coming to a close and I was about to depart on my college adventure I was already very much aware of two things. I loved God and I loved Music.

As the impending changes in my life grew closer and closer to becoming a reality the questions of what I was going to be doing with my life started to heat up, and with it the feeling that I had to choose between these two things. This was tough, it's like I had two kids in different sports with games at the same time and I had to choose as a parent which one I was going to go watch, but for forever. Talk about pressure. And of course I couldn't say no to God, the bible is packed with stories

of that happening and we all know how that went for Jonah, he kinda got eaten by a big fish...

Because of stories like this such as Moses uprising against his government, John the Baptist living a life fully to ministry and prophesying, Peter quitting his fisherman career to follow Jesus, along with all the other disciples I have a hard time relating to the Bible sometimes. The time period just seems so different and the people writing were living very different lives from our everyday, it all is foreign to this small town boy, but the verse I have chosen for us is an exception of that and I relate quite a lot to the author, Paul.

Paul wrote Philippians while he is in prison to his home church. One of this letters purposes was to address how they as a church were to live a life for Christ. See, when Paul wasn't ministering and serving his church he built tents. He was a minister and a labor worker. In this way Paul was able to bridge the gap between minister and everyday working person. I find this to be so beautiful. As we read through the bible we hear heroic stories of people who drop everything to live a life for Christ, which is fantastic, Moses, Peter, and Jonah all inspire me, but it seems like there is very little reference or example of how the ordinary should live, without being, for lack of better words, an extremist. This is what makes what Paul wrote so beautiful and valuable.

In his address to his home church Paul starts by writing "Carry out your own salvation." To continue the work of God, which leads to salvation, in their lives. Live a life that reflects Christ's work and continues it. If I'm wanting a life of meaning, then I was going to have to live it in my every day.

He then continues to unfold his advice by telling them the parts of what that way of living looks like. First, Paul tells them who to give praise too and why. He says to give praise to God (duh), and the why? Well Paul says "God...enables you to both want and to actually live out his good purposes" or in laymen terms, God helps those who follow God to change how we think and thus change how we act. He asks us to aim above morality. Don't just simply be good, be good for something. Be and do good for God.

Next, "Do everything without grumbling" ooo, ok this is getting tougher, we aren't always the best at this one. 'Everything' is a pretty tall order. I will come back to that one. Ok let's see what's next on the list! Wait...that is the end of the list? Paul continues to say how if we do this we will change, comparing us to stars that light the world, but as far as advice to live a life of Christ, that is it. Could it be as simple as doing two things?

This brings me back to my internship and my pursuit of purpose. The detail I left out from my story before is that I had a great love for God, but never really saw myself growing up to be a minister working in a church. Well what was the best way for me to figure out if I wanted to work in a church or not? Work for the church. Get in there and go to the meetings, make visits to shut ins or those in the hospital, lead small groups, go to choir rehearsal, bless the bread, and even dress up like a farmer to help grow the seeds that are our youth during VBS...

Now, if I was going to pursue living a life for Christ, a life of ministry, what was that going to look like if I wasn't standing here at the pulpit? That was my real question I wanted answers too going into this internship. One that tied all the way back to

my struggle between feeling like I had to pick between a career in music or in ministry. Could Paul have been speaking to a question that I had been wrestling for and search for an answer for, for my whole life? Something that could be narrowed down to a list of 2 more or less easy things: 1. Praise God for God is good 2. Do everything without grumbling. This was not the complex, un-understandably divine answer I was expecting. It was as simple as this.

Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.

I was reading a book by B.B. Taylor, an ordained minister now priest, who had the same question as me, “What was my purpose on this earth?”. While B.B. Taylor was going through seminary she would go to a fire escape (ironically enough to escape) and pray about this very question. Night after night faithfully conversing with God trying to figure this thing out, and God answered her by whispering “Do what pleases you, but belong to me.” x2. It’s not *what* we do for a living but *how* we do it that mattered. Your career does not have to be in the church to live a life for God, actually the exact opposite is true, because all life is Purpose-full. Life is Full of purpose. All of life is Divine. Life between the Sundays. Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God. The idea that I had to choose between music and ministry was a lie! The choose never even existed! I was right, I couldn’t say no to God, because no matter what I did, being a Christian was always going to be a part of who I was and what I did. And when you look at your work, and everything else between the Sundays in this light, it makes doing things without grumbling a whole lot easier.

It gives US the power to take the ordinary, the mundane and make it extra-ordinary, divine. Whether you drive a semi-truck,

teach, cook, heal, care for a child, work at a bank, make music, fix computers, or preach, whatever it is you do, do it for the glory of God. Acting for God together in Unity, with one common denominator. Now I finally understand what the Body of Christ is that the church has always told me about. It’s not an exclusive club of ministers, but it’s made up of the typical everyday person who take every human interaction as a chance to recognize the divine right there in front of us in human form, the typical everyday person doing his/her part to make the place in which they live just a little bit better.

This is how we can praise God 24/7, This is our purpose, and Paul tells us if we do this, on the day we meet God in heaven, we will be able to say ‘we haven’t worked for nothing’. That we lived a Christ like life. This of course includes more than just giving glory to God for everything but also acting with love, and humility. But like Paul mentions earlier, if we (1) praise God, God will enable us to think differently, (2) do it without grumbling, and thus act differently, in *everything*.

This leads to the second purpose of Paul’s letter, to give thanks and shine some light on the 24/7 praising his church was already doing. Calling his church his “partner in ministry” for all of the support they had given him. The church had financially supported him as he did mission work, but his gratitude extends past money and includes all the love and prayers his home church was giving him. Much like Paul I see The Church as my partner in ministry but more importantly I see This community and This church as my partner in ministry. You have supported me in so many different ways. From financially providing me pay along with my experiences, to sending me to camp, to giving me the opportunity serve the community by conversing with refugees, experience the culture

and music by housing performances, feeding me to the point of waddling, to open doors since the moment I walked up and open arms once I was inside.

I am extremely loved, and I am forever grateful. Every experience I've had in my life has gone with me. From my camp experience, to my many hours spend playing the churches piano, to family meals, to mission trips, to college, and currently to this internship, it has all shaped me and comes along with me for it was all purpose-full.

I urge you to continue doing the work that you are doing. It is not for nothing and does have an impact. This community and this church do work that was meaningful for me and is for many many others, in this room, and beyond. You may or may not end up here (on the pulpit) but whatever you do is valuable, and for myself in knowing this as I continue into the unknown future, have the security in knowing that I can praise God no matter what I do. No matter what I do, I can work in ministry. You all have shown me this. In your actions and how you live your day to day lives. That is what you taught me.

Now I hate standing up here and talking for so long so I am going to let you all get a piece of the action. I invite everyone to stand up and find someone that you are thankful for something they do in the community and tell them how much you appreciate them!

I will close us by quoting Paul "I'm glad with all of you. You should be glad about this in the same way. Be glad with me! Amen.