

Davidson College Presbyterian Church
Davidson, North Carolina
Robert Alexander
“Holy Purpose”
John 17:20-26
6th Sunday in Lent
March 20, 2016

In 2002, Rick Warren published his book *The Purpose Driven Life*. To date, over 25 million copies have been sold worldwide. It seems that a lot of people are asking the question, “What is my purpose in life?” And it is not just people of faith that are asking this question. Individuals, groups, and companies around the globe wrestle with this very question. There is a lot of time, energy, and money spent pursuing the answer to the question. Lots of books have been written about the subject and many statements are written and published which try to get at the essence of what an individual or groups primary purpose is.

We have done that right here at Davidson College Presbyterian Church. Perhaps you have gone through that process in your own life as you have gone through the Spiritual Discipline of creating a Rule of Life. How is it that we discover our purpose? Do we turn to the Westminster Catechism? Do we turn inward to search our hearts? Do we look to others or to the world around us? Do we turn to scripture? Warren, in his book, begins by quoting from Ephesians 1:11. “It is in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for.”

With this in mind we turn to the prayer that Jesus prayed in the Gospel According to John. This prayer was offered on behalf of Jesus’ disciples and on behalf of all those who would believe on account of the testimony of the disciples. In Jesus’ prayer we find clues as to Jesus’ understanding of his own Holy Purpose and of the Holy Purpose of the church, of you and me. In his prayer he prayed that we would be one and that we would know and be filled with the love of God. He prayed that we would be bound together and that in the living out of our faith we would bear witness to the love of God so that all the world might know and believe.

In these past weeks of Lent we have studied the call and the command to “Be Holy.” We have understood that calling as a way of life that sets us apart, not above, but apart from the worldly for a sacred purpose – a holy purpose – God’s own purpose. This theme has invited us into conversations around topics like justification, sanctification, reconciliation, love, community, holy living, and purpose. We have come to understand that our lives are meant to be lived intentionally and with purpose for the sake of God’s purpose.

Yesterday at the Pines we studied a passage from 2 Timothy that mentions God’s holy purpose. As we discussed what God’s purpose might be we settled on the scripture that proclaims that Jesus came so that we might have life and that we might have it fully. (John 10:10) We hear a similar message in Jesus’ prayer. He came to reveal God’s deep love for the world so that we might be made one with God and with one another. Full life is found in these reconciled and restored relationships! Friends, we are invited to share in that holy purpose. Our own lives find purpose and meaning in the purpose of Jesus. As we read at the beginning of Rick Warren’s book, we find out who we are in Christ.

And so, as enter this Holy Week, we see that Jesus walked and lived each day with intention and with purpose, knowing full well what would happen and what needed to happen so that his work would be complete and his purpose fulfilled. All that Jesus did was meant to fulfill his purpose to bring us

together with God and with one another. This would prepare us to witness to the world about God's amazing love and grace.

We remember the entry into Jerusalem. (*Hold up palm branches*). Jesus knew he must go there and that the prophets went there to die. He knew that as the rightful King of the people he should enter the streets humbly on the back of a donkey's colt. He did not need to enter as one about to conquer for he knew that the authority was already his.

We remember the gathering in the upper room and the meal that took place there. (*Hold up the plate and chalice*). Jesus took the bread and broke it and then poured wine from the cup proclaiming that a new covenant was now being made through his blood. This covenant created a new people through his death and brought forgiveness, healing, and wholeness. His body broken and his blood poured out would be the means to a reconciled and restored relationship with God and neighbor.

We remember the washing of feet (*Hold up the basin and the towel*) and the example of sacrificial love that Jesus gave us so that we could understand the call upon our lives to give ourselves for the sake of one another. Jesus invited us to learn this new way of love and to practice it in community with one another.

Finally, we remember the arrest, trial, suffering, and crucifixion. (*Hold up the cross*). As Jesus hung on the cross he gave up his spirit and finished the work that he had been given to do for the sake of the world.

His work has finished but ours has not. We find our purpose for living in his purpose and so we are invited to live with holy purpose and intention just as he did. As we hear the words of the passion story read and sung this morning, may we gain a deeper understanding of God's holy purpose for us and for the church.

To God be the Glory! Amen.