

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, July 10, 2011 – 11:00 AM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

Series: Every Christian a Minister
Finding Our Place in His Purpose - Matthew 28: 19-20

Introduction: When Sir Christopher Wren was overseeing the building of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, it wasn't unusual for him to show up unannounced to view the progress of its construction. Since much of the labor was sub-contracted, most of the workers didn't know who Sir Christopher Wren was. One day, he was making a tour and he came upon a worker and he stopped and asked him a question: "*May I ask what you are doing?*" The man said, "*I am cutting this stone to a certain size so it will fit up there toward the front facade.*"

Sir Christopher Wren came to another worker and he again stopped to ask what he was doing. The man replied, "*I am just trying to earn a living.*" Then he approached a third worker and asked him the same question. The man stopped what he was doing, stood to his feet and said, "*I have the honor of helping Sir Christopher Wren build St. Paul's Cathedral.*"

When we are saved and become a part of God's family, whether we know it or not, we have become a soldier in the mightiest army ever assembled and a crew member in the greatest construction project of all time – the building the kingdom of God. Just as there was a world of difference between the points of view of those three workers who were employed by Sir Christopher Wren, it makes a difference in how you see yourself as a Christian. You might see yourself as a small, insignificant bystander with absolutely nothing to do, or you might see yourself as someone who just goes through the motions doing mundane tasks, or you might see yourself as someone who is called to make a difference in the world. What I mean is, you are either filling space, or you are actively advancing the kingdom of God on earth.

For the next few minutes, I want to talk about this kingdom of God and our place in it. Specifically, I want us to come to understand that not only has God called a person to be saved, which is important; but there's an even bigger picture. Yes, Jesus died on the cross to save people from our sins, but once that happens, we need to understand that there's more to salvation than just being free from the penalty of sin. We are saved from sin so we can glorify God with our lives. In fact, glorifying God with our lives is how we testify to the world that we are saved, for Jesus said in **John 15:8 (NIV)** "*This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*" Now if that were not important, then why would Jesus spend so much time and effort teaching and training His disciples? Why didn't He just call them to be saved, and then take them on to heaven? In fact, why doesn't He do that with everyone? He doesn't because there's more to the Christian life than just getting saved. We have a purpose as Christians in God's church, and we'd best be finding out what it is and then getting busy doing it.

For the next few minutes we're going to look at the purpose of the church and the purpose of believers in God's church. First, let's look at what it is that is keeping the church from fulfilling God's purpose on earth:

1. Our Problem - One of the deadliest diseases that has invaded God's church is "*me-itus.*" By that I mean that some believers who once made their profession of faith in Christ as Savior and Lord by giving their lives to Him, have come down with a serious case of self-absorption. Instead of following the commands of Christ, and learning obedience to His Word, and being fruitful for the kingdom of God, these would-be soldiers of Christ have caught a disease that is turning them into its slaves. Instead of seeing themselves as warriors for Christ and builders of the kingdom of God, they are working for themselves. They are buying into the world's value system of personal accomplishment and achievement. Instead of believing that the meek shall inherit the earth, they turn their ear and their hearts toward a world that says, "*You deserve the earth on your own merit. You can have it your way. You deserve happiness and success. Your life is about seeking pleasure and avoiding pain.*" A lot of Christians have gotten caught up in that and the result is, they've been hoodwinked into believing that their purpose in life is bound up in seeking wealth and beauty, or popularity and power. This is a serious problem in God's church and it manifests itself in several ways. This is why there is chronic complaining in the church. This is why people become so sensitive and touchy. This kind of attitude leads to nothing but selfishness, greed, lethargy, apathy, and worldliness. And to makes matters worse, this "*me-itus*" disease is highly infectious because the lures of a pleasure-driven culture are hard to resist.

What I'm saying is that there seems to be a growing number of people in the church who just do not understand the concept of their purpose in their Christian life. They don't understand that their purpose as born again Christians and citizens of the Kingdom of God is not found in simply enjoying the pleasures of the Kingdom, but instead are found in ministry and service to others. This leads me to the second aspect of our purpose:

2. God's Plan - Bob and Bill were in the habit of meeting at the local golf course every Monday for a round of golf. One Monday, Bill didn't show up. Well, Bob went on and played his round and the next Monday, when they met, he said, "*Bill, I missed you last week. Are you ok?*" Bill said, "*Yeah, I'm ok. I couldn't come because my grandkids popped in for a visit and just I couldn't leave.*" "*Oh, I understand Bill. That's ok. Those grandkids are something special. I bet you hated to see them leave.*" "*Oh no Bob... quite the contrary. Yes, I loved to see those little angels come in on Monday, but I sure was glad to see those little devils leave on Saturday!*"

I told that as a joke, but we all know how special kids and grandkids are. And that is why the greater part of most adults lives are spent raising and loving kids.

You see, from the very beginning, God gave His creation a special assignment. In **Genesis 1:28 (NIV)**, God told Adam and Eve, "*Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.*"

God told the very first people He made that His plan for them was to procreate. In other words, it was as if God was saying, "*I'm giving you a special gift called sex, but the purpose of it is not just for your pleasure. That's a big part and I want you to use it within the context of marriage and the family. But there's something more. My plan is for you to also be fruitful and increase in number, so I'm creating within you the capability to multiply.*"

I used that example because, although the verbiage is different, the command that Jesus gave to His church is very similar. In **Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)**, as Jesus was about to ascend back to the Father following His resurrection, He gave His plan and pattern for His church. He said, "*...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*" What did He say? Was he not telling His church to go and multiply? Was He not saying, "*Be fruitful and increase in number?*" Yes He was! Jesus created within His church the capability to increase in number, and He gave His church His plan and pattern for carrying it out.

Church, this is Jesus' Great Commission to us. This is our marching orders, and in these orders, Jesus exempted no one. He didn't say, "*Only those who have the time can go.*" He didn't say, "*Only those who have completed a course in witness training can make disciples.*" He didn't say, "*Only those who have been ordained can baptize.*" He didn't say, "*Only those who have completed seminary can teach*" He didn't say "*Only those whom the nominating committee have appointed can do these things.*" No, He said that **all** believers Every believer is to go...Every believer is to make disciples, and baptize, and teach. Jesus didn't call anyone to just sit and soak in the glory, but He called every believer to go and serve Him and glorify God! Jesus called His people and His church to ministry.

Paul picks up on this command in his first letter to the Corinthians. He had wrote earlier about the giving and function of spiritual gifts within the church, and he said in **1 Corinthians 12:18 (NIV)** "*God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.*" In other words, God has put every member in the church where He wants them because He has gifted each one for service. So not only have we been called by God to salvation, but part of that plan of salvation is to serve Him by spreading the good news through witness and service. We have not been called, however to be spectators or spreaders of confusion or discontent.

What I'm trying to say today is that God has instilled in every believer's heart a sense of purpose that is directly related to His purpose. It's called ministry and ministry at its basic level is simply serving Christ by serving people. And because God has created us to minister in His name, every believer and every church member should want to make a contribution to His cause which is a greater cause than our own. God alone is worthy of our best efforts and our highest devotion. He alone is worthy of our all.

Conclusion: One of the tasks God has called me to do as Pastor is to equip the church to become ministers in the world. And I am to accomplish that task in and through the three main ministries of the church –

Worship, Bible Study, and Discipleship. Worship that doesn't lead to ministry will become self-serving and self-edifying. This is an area where some churches have had problems. When individuals or small groups of people want a certain style of music in the worship service and they do not take into consideration what is best for the entire church, then the worship has become "*me-focused*" rather than "*God-focused*." When folks want what they want in music or worship style, they have forgotten who the audience is. In worship, the audience is God, not us. And when we truly worship God, He will always lead us to service and ministry.

Likewise, Bible Study and Discipleship that doesn't lead to ministry will become self-fulfilling and prideful. When we think our Bible Study is just for us, we have become like the lady whom the new pastor went to visit. He had heard that she had just received her 50 year attendance pin for Sunday School, and he wanted to visit her and personally congratulate her. And sure enough, when he sat down with her and shared a cup of coffee, he saw all the notebooks she had that were full of meticulous notes she had taken in Sunday School. He asked her which class she taught, and she told him that she wasn't a teacher. He asked her about the many young women she had taken under her wing over the years and mentored them, but she told him that she hadn't done any of that. He then asked her, "*Well what ARE you doing with all this knowledge you've amassed over the years?*" She replied, "*Nothing, I just like to take notes, and when I fill up a notebook, I put it on the shelf and start another one.*" I'll say it again... Bible Study and Discipleship that doesn't lead to ministry will become self-fulfilling and a source of pride. If our goal as a church is not focused on ministry, we will get caught up in serving ourselves. We'll think it's all about us and what we want. And we'll be busy building our own kingdoms, and that will become the total sum of our work. We'll come down with "*me-itus*."

As we continue in these messages, if you have not found your place of service, my prayer is that you will consider the call of God upon your life. I pray that you will consider the sacrifice God made to secure your salvation and the investment He's made in you, and then I pray that you will ask God to reveal to you how you can say "*thank-you*" to Him for all He's done for you.

If you've already found your place of service, or are actively seeking it, my prayer is that you will be encouraged to keep on. God will reward your service as you remain faithful to Him and His calling.

If you've never asked Jesus into your life, this would be a good time and place to give yourself to Him. He's offering you salvation today, and you have to do that before you can begin to serve Him. If God is speaking to you in any way today, I invite you to come and find your place in His plan.