

**WHY ARE WE HERE?**  
**Pentecost 9 – July 18 & 22, 2018 (s750.doc)**  
**238 – 239:1,2 – 369:2 – 236 – 250 – 458**  
**Pastor Thomas Fricke**

*Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil....*

*The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”*

—Genesis 2:8-9,15-17

It was riveting news that caught the entire world’s attention. **[image of coach and boys in cave]** For eighteen days twelve boys and their soccer coach were trapped deep within a cave in northern Thailand—no place to be at the start of the rainy season. Soon it became clear that there was no way they would be able to get themselves out alive. They could only hope to be rescued by someone else. **[images of rescuers]** Rising water, tight passages, and jagged rock walls made the rescue operation treacherous, and cost the life of one Thai navy seal.

Imagine if you were one of those boys—lost, without food, running out of oxygen...unsure: “Will we live or will we die?” What would you be **thinking?**

Or—maybe more to the point—what if you **thought** you were going to die, but somehow, miraculously, you came through it all alive? **[boys’ soccer team]** Do you suppose it might make a difference in your life? Do you think it might change the way you live?

- Would you find a way to reconcile with the people you’ve had a falling out with and apologize to those you’ve hurt?
- Would you resolve to spend more time with the people who really matter—your family—and look for ways to help and serve others?
- Would you take the time to grow in your relationship with God and dedicate your life to sharing his forgiving love?

Maybe. **[blank screen]** But to ask is to realize that there is an even bigger question behind these: **Why should it take a tragedy (or near tragedy) for us to begin to live with a real sense of purpose in life?**

Today is the second week of our sermon series “Soul Searching,” dealing with the big questions of life. Last week we asked the question “**Where did we come from?**” Today we want to discuss another great question:

**“WHY ARE WE HERE?”**

For a lot of people, that question, “Why are we here” — “What’s it all about?” has no answer. And if we hear what the psychologists are telling us, too many people today are living in the fear that, as far as anyone else is concerned, they might just as well have never lived. That’s troubling, because the God who **made** us, has also **given** us **a real purpose for living**. And it’s a joy to live out that purpose in our lives.

---

So what is my purpose in life? **[blank screen]** Let’s talk about that.

- If I’m going to draw my answer from social media or what I see on TV, I might decide that I’m here to have fun. My whole purpose in life is to go out and **party**. I’m here to live for **myself**.
- If I look to the business world, I might conclude that life is all about money. My goal in life is to get everything I can for myself so that I can be the one who dies with the most toys.
- Or maybe I’m driven by the desire to make a name for myself...to be successful and build a legacy for myself that will be remembered for generations to come.
- If I listen to the intellectuals, the philosophers of this world, it’s my purpose in life to learn more and more about the world so that I can serve to advance civilization and technology.

Which is it? What is my purpose in life? In the end, none of these answers satisfies. But there is a wise man in the Bible who has already done the research for us. And he reaches a very different conclusion.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, old King Solomon looks back on his life and all the things he had done to explore the meaning of life. He says, *"I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives"* (Ecclesiastes 2:3).

- He says, *"I tried cheering myself with wine and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom"* (Ecclesiastes 2:3).
- He says, *"I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards"* (Ecclesiastes 2:4).
- He says, *"I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces"* (Ecclesiastes 2:8).

He concludes: *"I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness. The wise man has eyes in his head, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both"* (Ecclesiastes 2:13,14). Wise or foolish, we all still die.

Sure, money is important...and work is a big part of who we are, but that doesn't mean that that's why we're here. And it's okay to be entertained, but to relentlessly run after fun and parties is not the reason God made us. Even the pursuit of wisdom, if it's just wisdom for its own sake, doesn't answer the most basic question of all: **Why am I here? What is my purpose in life?** That answer comes from God alone, who made us. [blank screen]

---

In Genesis 1 we read that the Lord God made man as the crown of his creation. And in chapter 2, we read that the Lord planted a garden in Eden, and there he placed the man he had created. *"And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...."* (Genesis 2:9). *"...And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die'"* (Genesis 2:16,17). Do you read this and think, "God, don't do this! You know what's going to happen. Adam and Eve will sin and mess everything up for everyone else." But don't you think God had a reason for planting that tree? And don't you think he had a reason for putting it in the middle of the garden? And don't you think he had a reason for giving the man and his wife that one command, "Don't eat"? He's providing a way for Adam and Eve to worship their God. Martin Luther put it this way:

**"This tree of the knowledge of good and evil was Adam's church, altar, and pulpit. Here he was to yield to God the obedience he owed, give recognition to the Word and will of God, give thanks to God, and call upon God for aid against temptation."**

Every time Adam and Eve walked past that tree—every time they consciously obeyed the Lord's command—it was as if to say, "Lord, you are everything to me. I want to live for you and obey your commands. And even though there is this one thing you've told me I can't do, you've already given me so many blessings that I can't help but thank you. So help me to resist the temptation to do what you don't want me to do."

In other words, this tree was Adam and Eve's chance to fulfill their ultimate purpose in life: **to give all glory to God**. Do you understand? God hasn't given us his commands just because he's trying to take all the joy out of our lives. He's not holding anything back from us that will keep us from being truly happy. No. His commands are a **blessing** to us. He's giving us the opportunity to **thank** him—to freely and willingly **worship** him with all our heart, soul, and mind. That's our purpose in life. **We're here to give all glory to God**.

Jesus did shows us how. [blank screen] There is a reason he chose to come into this world. There is a reason he humbled himself to become a man. There is a reason he gave himself over to his enemies, allowed himself to be mocked and abused, and finally went to the cross. He came to undo our wrongs. He came to restore our broken relationship with God. He came to make everything right again.

*“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). What’s my purpose in life? Not to have fun. Not to make money. Not to make a name for myself. No. ***I am here to give glory to the God who made me***, and I do that by serving him and others in the way I live. And I can do it right here, right now.

---

In Psalm 90, Moses says, *“The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength”* (Psalm 90:10). If you do the math, that’s 25,000 or 30,000 days in our lives. For a lot of us, a good chunk of that time is already gone. The clock is ticking. The time is short. So what will you do with your time? You don’t need to perform some great act of courage for the Lord. You don’t need to make some tremendous sacrifice. You don’t need to travel overseas and be a missionary. No. Just bloom where you’re planted. ***Serve the Lord where you are.***

*“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13). This is our purpose in life—to forgive, as we have been forgiven, to love, without expecting anything in return, to serve God and love the people in our lives. But don’t wait to do it. If you need to spend time with your family, ***do it now***. If you need to apologize to someone, ***don’t wait***. If you need to share the gospel with someone who doesn’t know Jesus and his forgiving love, ***now is the time!*** God has chosen you to make an impact on the world. And he’s positioned you to fulfill a unique purpose that ***only you*** can fulfill. And that’s what makes your life worth living!

AMEN.