

## For This Purpose

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Scripture: Luke 4:38-44

*Then He got up and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her. And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them.*

*While the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them. Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.*

*When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose."*

*So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.*

When we read through the Gospels and see all the things that Jesus did, we're amazed at how He managed to do so much and yet stay focused on the most important things in His life. At a macro level, one gets the sense that He is always connected to what His call was to be on earth and what He needed to do every moment in terms of the specific call as opposed to the many things that He could do that were available to Him. At a micro level, this passage of scripture gives us an insight into how He managed that.

When we read this passage, we see that He is doing very well: Many people have come to hear about Him, they are taken up by the miracles that He is doing. We see Him casting out demons, the people are following Him and there are crowds all around Him. It seems that this would be the best platform for Him to just stay and minister and do what He needed to do there. Yet we learn that He moves away to a secluded spot to pray. Then when they come and find Him, He says to them, "I must preach the Kingdom of God to the other cities also – for I was sent for this purpose."

This passage of scripture helps us to see how Jesus kept His focus. There are 2 or 3 things that grab our attention:

1. **He understood the importance of maintaining His relationship with His Father.** At the height of all that He was doing, the popularity, seeing people healed and demons being cast out, instead of milking that He goes away and finds a quiet place to commune with His Father. If we look at other times in the Bible where Jesus did that, we see that every time there were important decisions to be made, the first thing that He did was to connect with His Father.  
In Luke 6:12, He goes away and prays through the night, and then in the morning He picks the disciples who will be with Him during His time on earth.  
Then in Gethsemane when He was crying out to God, trying to decide between His will and the Father's will, we see that went to the Father and he spent time with the Father. Again, here we see, in the midst of His popularity, He chose to move away,

not to indulge in it and exult in what was going on but to move away to His Father and find that connection with Him.

I remember reading an incident involving Mother Teresa. An intern had come to work in the home. The first day, this intern was so overwhelmed with the need there that the next day she got up an hour earlier so that she could begin her work and be able to do what needed to be done. Mother Teresa asked her, "Child, what are you doing? Why are you up so early?" She replied, "Yesterday, I found that there wasn't enough time to finish up everything." Mother Teresa asked, "Have you spent time with the Lord, with Jesus?" And the girl replied, "No! There was no time for that. There was so much work to be done." Mother Teresa said, "If you don't spend time with Jesus, you will never be able to impart what Jesus wants impart to these people." You have to! The greater the work, the more the time you need to spend with the Father.

2. **He clearly understood His purpose.** In v42, when they came and tried to keep Him from going away from them, He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose." He had a clear idea of what His purpose was at that time.
3. **He knew how to prioritize.** He wasn't deterred by all the things that were happening around Him. He wasn't deterred by the people who were being healed. That can happen! So often you get caught up and say that God is here and you've got to do more and more. But Jesus was willing to put a full stop and say, "There is a greater purpose. My purpose is not to stay here and heal people or to see demons cast out, or to see great crowds come." He wasn't deterred by any of them. He knew how to carry out His priorities.

So how can we take these three things and apply them to our own hearts and lives? We must ask three questions in light of this scripture.

1. *How is your relationship with God this morning?*  
Are you on talking terms? Are you spending time with Him? Have you just allowed yourself to be sucked away into a faraway place? You're saying – I can't handle the things that are going on. When it all passes, then I'll come back to Him. Or are you too busy doing things that you may think are what would please God? But are they? Is God still the focus of your life and your attention?

The irony is that you can be away from God when things are going badly for you, and you can be away from God when things are going well for you. Both work. Sometimes when we get into a bad place, when situations and circumstances are lining up against us, we just ship out and say: Okay, I'm not ready. I can't have any more conversations with God. And we pull away from Him. And sometimes things are going well and we're just enjoying the blessings of God and we forget to focus on the blesser, the One who is giving all things to us. So however your life is going this morning, the important question is – do you have a vital dynamic relationship with Him this morning? Or do you have to find your way back home?

I think of the prodigal son sitting in that place and thinking about his home. It's always a good place – to be in a loving relationship with God. There is always one point in our lives when we say: I will arise and go. Get up from where we are and go

and meet the Father and spend time with Him. Sometimes it is difficult at the end of the day; we are so tired having done a whole lot of things, that we just don't have time for the Lord. We just fall into bed saying 'Lord thank you so much!' and we are off to sleep.

I know because very often I am in that place as well. I am so tired at the end of the day that I just want to crawl into bed, close my eyes and end the day. And then there's a very soft small voice that whispers in my ear that says, "Love, should we pray?" And I look at Sheila and I say, "Really? Now?" Then I agree and so we both get up and sit up so we can pray. And then she says, "Shall we sing a hymn or a song?" And my heart sinks even further as I realize that sleep has receded. Yet the truth is that at the end of it, there's such a wonderful place that we are in, that we can just lay our heads down and sleep, so thankful that we spent time with Him.

Tiredness can push God out of our day – even tiredness of doing what He wanted you to do through the day. So the question for you and me today is: how is our relationship with Him? Is it a good relationship; is it vital, is it enduring? Is it something that you long for? Or are you in a far place this morning?

2. *Do you know your purpose in life?*

For this moment, for now, are you doing exactly what God wants you to do? Sometimes we look at the work we do and we think that that's our purpose. And yet, if we are honest with ourselves, we realize that's not the reason that God has placed me here – to climb the corporate ladder. I believe that, while that is very important, the focus needs to be on seeking Him and everything else will then follow. That's what the Bible offers us: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things (including success in your work place) will be added unto you." But He has to be the first person that you seek.

So do you understand your purpose this morning? Do you know why you are here? Do you know why God placed you in this world now, in this year rather than a hundred years back or a hundred years to come? Why are you here today? Is that purpose clear? Col. 3:2 says, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things of the earth." Somehow I believe that our purpose must be eternal in nature rather than temporal. Our purpose cannot be the accumulation of things. Our purpose has to have eternal ramifications. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians that on that final day, what we've done will go through fire. It will either be hay, stone and rubble, or it will be gold, silver and precious stones; but the fire will prove it.

So, do you know what your purpose is? The Westminster Catechism, written in 1646, said, "The highest aim of humanity was to have a loving relationship with God, to enjoy Him and to glorify Him in everything, to glorify Him and to enjoy Him forever." Then we need to ask – are the things that we do glorifying God? Do we have this wonderful relationship with Him?

Most of you have seen that beautiful poem 'Footprints in the Sand', of a man who had a dream that he saw his life go before him. He saw his footprints and then he recognized God's footprints. They were going together, and then there were some that were away. At one point he realized that only God's footprints were there. So he asked God what happened during that time. And God said, "Don't you know? That's when I carried you, and that's why only My footprints were visible." But

somebody wrote a sequel to that which went like this: - After the part where there were only God's footprints, there were footprints of his and God's all over the place, just randomly placed. So he went back to God and said, "God, I understand all that has happened so far – the times I went away from you, and the times when I came back, the times that were difficult and You carried me. But these are so random, Lord. What happened?" And God said to him, "Don't you remember? That was when we danced together."

Sometimes, that's something we just can't comprehend, especially for those of us who have a difficult time doing even two steps. To think of dancing with God even sounds sacrilegious! But the Bible says that God dances over us. He spins over us with great joy.

Have you ever been with a partner who, when you are dancing, they don't? I think that would be the situation with God and us. He is spinning all around us, with us, and we are still and motionless. The sense of purpose that we must have with God involves that. Sometimes we think that being a Christian means that we have to give up everything and walk a barren path. When I was young, that was what it seemed to be – I can't do this, I can't do that. Yet, there's nothing I want to do today being a Christian that I did when I was not. I don't desire anything. It's such a fulfillment and you know it.

But what is your purpose in life? It's so easy to get drawn away from that. I was reading a story of a lighthouse along a bleak coast that was tended by a keeper who was given enough oil for one month and told to keep the light burning every night. One day a woman asked for oil so that her children could stay warm. He gave it. Then a farmer came saying that his son needed oil so he could read. He gave it. Still another needed it for an engine and he gave it. The keeper saw each of these as a worthy request and measured out just enough to satisfy all.

Near the end of the month, the tank in the lighthouse ran dry. And that night the beacon was dark, and three ships crashed on the rocks. More than 100 lives were lost. When a government official investigated, the man explained what he had done and why. The official said, "You were given one task alone and it was to keep the light burning; everything else was secondary." That brought home the truth that sometimes our purposes get confused with needs around us that seem worthy, and yet, don't have anything to do with God's calling on our lives and the purpose that He has instilled for us.

### 3. *Are we able to prioritize our purpose?*

Maybe this morning you are saying – I clearly understand what I need to do. I understand my role. The question is: are you able to make sure that it stays the main thing?

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote, "Things which matter most must ever be at the mercy of things which matter least."

Stephen Covey, in his bestseller 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People', captures it in a single phrase when he says, "Organize and execute around priorities." It's so easy to lose our sense of focus and get caught up doing a whole lot of things that are good, and yet are not what we ought to be doing. Then we lose our focus and we lose our purpose.

E.M. Gray said it well when he says, "The most important thing is putting first things first."

Beloved, Jesus managed to do so much in His life, complete every agenda in His life, and fulfill the reason why He came to earth, all because He understood that communion with His Father was the uppermost. The most important thing that He could do was to make sure that the communion with His Father was never broken. And then through that, He was able to have a clear purpose on the things that He needed to do and He was able to discern what was a priority so that His purpose was fulfilled.

God has placed each one of us here for a particular reason, a particular purpose that only you can fulfill. Only you! The question that we must ask ourselves: Is that purpose diluted? Have I lost a sense of what it is that I need to do? Do I need to look once again at my priorities? Have I even understood my purpose? And maybe for you to do the latter two, the first must be what we bring to the table this morning.

Do we have a clear connection with Him? Are we spending time with Him, reading His Word, praying, meditating? Are we able to be in a place where we can say, "Lord, I'm just going to sit and wait upon You." Sometimes we forget to do that. We ask God for things and we get up and go without listening to what He has to say. Do you give yourselves time in your quiet time to just be still and hear His voice speaking to you? What is your purpose? Has it got clouded out? Do you need to reconnect with Him this morning?

Just take a moment and answer those questions. Maybe the Holy Spirit is inviting you to do one of those three or all of those three. Would you respond to Him? Would you say – Lord, I'm coming home. I will arise and go to my Father. Lord, would You give me clear purpose this morning? I want to do nothing but follow after You and know what You want me to do. Lord, would You take away all those things that cloud my purpose and give me clear priorities.

Shall we pray?

Father, meet us in these moments. Help us to answer those questions and to make course corrections if we need to. Maybe, Lord, there are some who just need to reach back to You, and they are doing that now. Would You give them a picture of the Father waiting with open arms to receive? Help us, Lord, to be clear-minded, focused on the purposes that You have called us to. We ask this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.