

# How to Discover Your Purpose in Life

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Date: 15 November 2020

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning, St. Silas. My name is Martin Ayres. I'm the senior pastor here. It's great you can join us if you're at home. It's great you could be here if you've gathered. We're going to be looking together at that very challenging passage.

It's actually the last sermon in the series we've been in for some time in Luke's Gospel. In our series, we move on to a different series next week. If you are at home, do get a Bible to hand or look at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com) so that you can see Luke 19.

And you can see it on your sheets next to an outline if you find that helpful here in the room. But let's ask for God's help now as we turn to his word. Let's bow our heads and I'll lead us in a prayer. Almighty God and loving Heavenly Father, as we hear these words from your anointed King, the Lord Jesus, grant us clear sight to see the truth for ourselves, clear minds to know what you're calling us to, and humble hearts to accept your word.

For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. In 1929, the stock markets had been rising all over the world for some time.

[ 1 : 1 2 ] And it looked as though that would go on forever. People just thought the smart way to make money is you put it into stocks. And Bernie Baruch was a leading stock market investor in New York.

And on his way to work one morning, he got his shoes shined, as was his custom. And the shoe shining boy looked up at him while shining his shoes and said, Mr. Baruch, I've got a stock market tip for you.

You'll make a fortune if you invest in a certain company. And he told him. And he was walking to work reflecting on the advice from the shoe shiner. And he got to work.

And he didn't invest in the company the shoe shiner had recommended. Instead, he sold everything. And his theory was, when the shoe shining boys give stock market tips, that's a sign that the market is overpriced.

And a correction must be coming. So he sold everything. And in the Great Depression that followed through the 1930s, he was one of the few people who actually made a lot of money.

[ 2 : 1 6 ] When the shoe shine boys give stock market tips, that's a sign that the market is overpriced and a correction is coming. So there was a man who saw what was coming.

And even though the people around him hadn't seen it, he was courageous enough to act. And he benefited from it. Now, we've called this sermon series in Luke's Gospel, Be People of the Future. And this morning's teaching from Jesus is this great opportunity to see from him what's coming. And to change the way we live today in light of it.

We're catching up with Jesus in Jericho, on the way to Jerusalem. And he's been on this journey since chapter 9 of Luke's Gospel. Now, he's just 16 miles away. So the atmosphere around him has reached fever pitch.

And you see that in verse 11, if you just have a look down, that the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. That's why he tells this parable. Why do they think that?

[ 3 : 1 8 ] Well, Jesus has demonstrated by his works and by his words that he is the long-awaited, promised, rescuing king that God would send. And the people, therefore, think, as he heads into Jerusalem, this is where he will establish his reign.

The end of the world is 16 miles away. It's two days' walk away. It's coming. And Jesus tells this story to teach us about the delay. So that's our first point.

The king will return despite delay. If you have a look with me at verse 12, he said, A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.

So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. Put this money to work, he said, until I come back. But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, We don't want this man to be our king.

He was made king, however, and returned home. So the mindset of the hearers is, If this is God's king come to save us, then the time, the day when he judges the world and makes everything new is right round the corner.

[ 4 : 30 ] And what Jesus is doing here, as he does elsewhere, is he pulls apart those two events for his hearers to say, No, Jesus has come first time, God's promised king, to make the road for salvation for anyone who turns to him.

And the time when he will come to judge the world and put it right is some way off. He's teaching them then and us today about the delay between his resurrection and his return.

So Jesus, as he does that, is actually drawing on a very prominent event for his hearers. Herod the Great, who you might know from the Christmas account, he's the Herod, the king, who hates the news that the baby Jesus is being born and orders the slaying of baby boys.

When he died, his son, Herod Archelaus, was in line to become king. But to become king, he had to go on a journey to Rome. In the days of the Roman Empire, and the emperor had to crown him.

And he would then return and be king of that region. And when he set off Herod Archelaus, knowing what he was like, a separate boat went to Rome that was a delegation of people from the region to petition the emperor not to make Archelaus the king.

[ 5 : 53 ] And in that case, it seems it was successful in that the emperor didn't make him king. He was made ruler though, and he came back and was pretty brutal. And then his reign didn't last long.

So, Jesus' point here is, his arrival back as king is delayed, and his reign as king is resisted, but the outcome is clear, it's certain.

God has appointed him king. And not king of heaven, king of this world, king of this universe that he's left, and he will return. And we know that through his resurrection and ascension, that that was God's way of saying, this is my king.

It's an encouragement for us. If we can think of ways that we have chosen to live as though Jesus is king today, and it looks weird, because people around us don't live like that.

It's encouraging to be assured by him, to expect that, not to be shaken by there being people around who say and believe all kinds of things about him, to take assurance from him saying, expect that, there will be people who don't want him as king, and he will still return.

[ 7 : 10 ] We also get shaken by the delay, don't we? We think, but isn't the world just seemingly going on as it always has, as though there is no God, as though Jesus will never return.

But Jesus, again, he tells us in this story, there will be a delay. He's very clear about that. Verse 12, he describes the journey as off to a distant country, as though we're to expect that there will be a significant delay before he returns.

None of us likes to wait, do we? And a delay actually seems a lot longer when you're enduring it. And sometimes you can find that a delay seems interminable while you're waiting, and then you look back and think, oh, it wasn't that bad, was it?

It wasn't that long. I was thinking about weddings this week. I like weddings. But at some weddings, there is just a great deal of waiting around, isn't there?

Especially for the food. If the wedding's, you know, been at lunchtime, and you think, oh, I can't really eat lunch, but there'll be food, and then they call it a wedding breakfast, traditionally. So you think, well, that's bound to be early, and then you're just waiting hours for it.

[ 8 : 23 ] And I remember being at a wedding a few years ago where the wait was so long that by the time the canapes were being brought out, there was a crowd of us around the kitchen door waiting to swoop in.

We'd become like locusts waiting for something. I nearly went out for a kebab with my mates just waiting for this food. It seemed interminable. And then once you eat, you think, it wasn't that long, just a couple of hours.

And folks, 2,000 years so far, it's not actually as long as we sometimes think it is. I was talking to my dad recently, and I hadn't realized before, his grandmother, so my dad's grandmother, who he met, he knew, was born in 1863.

2,000 years is not that many lifetimes ago. And I think when we look back in the new creation, we'll think, it wasn't that long.

So we need to understand the times we live in, that Jesus told us to expect that, that gap in time. But our first point is the king will return despite delay.

[ 9 : 33 ] And he's still profoundly interested in what's going on here before he returns. So that's our second point. The king commissions and judges his people.

Let's look at verse 13 again. So he called 10 of his servants and gave them 10 minas. Put this money to work, he said, until I come back.

So this is the key. While the king is away, he wants his people to look after his interests. So each servant is given a mina. It's about three months wages for a laborer.

So let's think of it as five grand. Five grand that's on loan to be a good steward of and invest for the king's purposes until he's back.

Just as everything we have has been given to us by God. The person you are, the skills and talents that God has given to you, the set of relationships that you have and the life situation that God has put you in, it's all from him.

[ 10 : 41 ] And Jesus the king is watching to see what you do with those gifts for his priorities. Put this money to work, he said, until I come back.

I don't know what you think about that, but I think Jesus teaches this parable because he wants us to radically change in the way that we orient our whole lives.

To live every day in light of his return. And yet, left to ourselves, our natural tendency is just to drift away from this. It's just not our mentality, is it?

You know, finding church hard work? Well then, just don't go. Just relax at home. Not enjoying growth group?

Well, why not just take a break? Finding life stressful? Well, you don't have time to pray. You'd be better off just getting on and doing the jobs that are stressing you out.

[ 11 : 42 ] We forget that in the game of life, the main aim of the game is serving the king until he returns. That's the idea.

By making use of the gifts and responsibilities we've been given. Put this money to work until I come back. So what is the king's work he wants us to work for?

Well, this was a key discovery for me this week. The clarity of this in Luke 19. It's that you can see here that Luke wants us to draw the connection between this parable and what has just happened and what Jesus has literally just said.

So look at verse 11 and you can see that. When did Jesus tell this parable? It says, while they were listening to this. That's how we know he was in Jericho.

And what were they listening to? They were listening after Jesus has just rescued Zacchaeus, a man who was spiritually lost. Jesus sees him.

[ 12 : 46 ] He declares him as one of God's people. Now he saves him. And then in Luke 19 verse 10, if you've got a Bible, do have a look because it could just change your life. Luke 19 verse 10 that they're just listening to is this.

Jesus says, the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. That is the primary reason, we might even say the whole reason, that there is this delay between the resurrection and the return of Jesus.

The reason Jesus hasn't just brought an end already to evil and injustice and suffering, it's because he's on a search and rescue mission so that anyone, anywhere, can escape the coming judgment by putting their trust in Jesus and his death on the cross for their sins.

Lots of other things in the world are important to God. When you come to know God, it should generate in you a deep concern for the poor, for the disadvantaged, for victims of injustice.

When we know this is God's world and he made it, we should be concerned about climate change and endangered species. But when Jesus wants to sum up his work in the world, the purpose of his mission, it's search and rescue.

[ 14 : 17 ] That's what he came for. Proclaiming the news about who he is and what he's done so that people can put their trust in him and be saved from the judgment we deserve for our sin.

So what will the kingdom of God look like until Jesus returns? It will look like Zacchaeus last week, Luke 19. people joyfully meeting Jesus, discovering that he was looking for them and gladly handing over their lives to him because he saved them.

That's the work of building the kingdom of God. And he would have you look at the manner he's given you, your life, your skills, your experience, your money, your time, your home, your resources,

your relationships, everything you have, and line up your whole life behind his mission because he's the king and he said put this money to work until I come back.

Building up his church through helping other people grow in their faith and be established and grow to maturity and building out the church through new people coming to know him as they hear of him.

So what does the king expect to find on his return? That's our third point. The servants who receive a generous reward.

[15:39] So let's look at verse 15. He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he'd given the money in order to find out what they had gained with it.

The first one came and said, Sir, your money has earned ten more. Well done, my good servant. His master replied, Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.

The second came and said, Sir, your money has earned five more. His master answered, You take charge of five cities. Well just think about that.

Picture meeting Jesus the day you die or if it comes sooner, the day Jesus returns. And he says to you about how you've lived, Well done, my good servant.

Isn't that what we want? Wouldn't that be wonderful? I was thinking of a picture of this. Some of you might remember, not all of you will remember, there was a tennis player, Jana Novotna, when I was at school watching Wimbledon, watching tennis.

[16:50] And she got to the final of Wimbledon and she lost, I think it was to Steffi Graf and the Duchess of Kent used to give out the trophies to the winners and runners-up every year at Wimbledon and the singles.

And when Novotna went forward to get the runners-up shield from the Duchess of Kent, she was overcome with the exhaustion, the emotion, the disappointment.

And she burst into tears and the Duchess of Kent put her arms around her to comfort her and you could see she spoke to her and afterwards people said, you know, what did she say to you? And she said, well, she said, I think you'll be back and I think you'll win it.

And a few years later, it was third time lucky for Jana Novotna and she won the Wimbledon title. I think she was the oldest woman to win for the first time.

And she'd become friends with the Duchess of Kent through what had happened that day. And there was this great moment that you can see in the archives of her running towards the Duchess of Kent and the Duchess of Kent just so delighted that she'd won.

[17:59] And you could see she hugged her and then she looked her in the eye and she said, I'm so very proud of you. Well done. It was just this great moment of well done. I've watched you.

I was rooting for you. Well done. And we hear here that we're invited to picture Jesus, the King of the world, that He's rooting for us today and He's watching what we do and He's longing to say to us, well done, my good servant.

He came to seek us and to save us at immense cost to Himself. He loves us. He wants to say that to us. And imagine hearing that from Him. I know about it all.

I've seen the life that you've lived. I know the difficulties that you had to endure. I know the life you've tried to lead. Well done. For you did what you could for the building of my kingdom.

And notice the reason for the commendation. Verse 17. He says, because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter. Lots of us think, I just don't seem to be able to offer very much.

[19:10] We think, well if only I was a natural at languages and could live cross-culturally and I could go to a different country and translate the Bible for people there. Or if only I wasn't so shy or I was a bit more popular.

You know, maybe I could persuade my sports team or my friends to have a better look at Jesus. Or if only I had tons of money and I could give in a way that meant I could pay for loads of workers and buy loads of buildings for church planting.

I just don't seem to be able to have any real impact. But Jesus says, in a very small matter, He gave us what we have.

He knows what we've got. And we can put our mina to work for Him. And we do that in the thousands of ordinary, everyday decisions that we make. Every day, every week.

I think of a friend who's in a busy, responsible job, but he looks ahead to the summer plans for his family every year and he locks in the Christian summer camps he wants his kids to be on and the

Christian summer camp that he goes and cooks on before they plan anything else for their summer about what they'll do with their holidays, who they'll see.

[ 20 : 25 ] Or another friend who works part-time so that she can fill her diary with meeting international students to offer a welcome to them and hopefully to open the Bible with them.

Or a friend who arrived at church here in Glasgow and said, look, I'm new here. Spiritually, I've got spare hands. Where do you need help? How can I help? I take it these are the kind of people to whom God will say, well done.

Jesus will see what you give. Give of your little and he'll see it. And notice how generous the reward is. It's ridiculous.

Because you've been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of five cities. Or the other person gets another five. Because they did well with five grand that they got lent, see how they get on.

I'll give them a population the size of Scotland to look after in the new creation. It's a picture. We're not clear quite what the rewards will look like in glory in the new creation.

[ 21 : 37 ] But Jesus giving us a picture here of that the reward he will give people, his people, on judgment day will be extravagantly generous. You only ever get to be part of God's kingdom to get to heaven by grace alone, through faith alone.

Our works do not contribute to that. At the same time, the Bible is clear that there'll be varying degrees of rewards for Christians in the new creation depending on how we have lived for him, for Jesus.

If you want to chase up other references, there's Matthew 6, 18 to 20, there's 2 Corinthians 5, 9 and 10, Galatians 6, 9 and 10, 1 Timothy 6, 17 to 19.

It looks clear that there will be these rewards in heaven. There just won't be any envy or jealousy in heaven so we won't feel kind of disgruntled that other people got a greater reward than we got.

And we get a bit uncomfortable about the idea of doing something motivated by personal reward, but it's worth saying that Jesus is a lot less embarrassed. He seems to be a lot less embarrassed to motivate us like this than we are ourselves.

[ 22 : 55 ] He has a place, at least a place for saying to us, if you want to do what's good for you, then put your back into the Christian life. Just crack on because He is looking for ways to reward us generously.

But back in the story, there is a servant who doubts the generosity of the king. So that's our final point, the subjects who are killed as enemies. Let's pick things up again in verse 20.

Then another servant came and said, Sir, here is your mina. I've kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. And then we see what he thinks of the king.

Verse 21, I was afraid of you because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow. But the master points out that if he really did think that, about the master, then he would have behaved quite differently, even on his own terms.

It's like the person today who might say to you, I don't know why you love God. I think he seems like a hard taskmaster. I don't really like the character of God.

[ 24 : 08 ] And you might think, well, if you really thought that, you wouldn't have nothing to do with God. You would strive every day, probably more than I do, to serve him, if that's what you thought he was like.

But the behavior demonstrates that they don't really think he's ever coming back. And so it is with this servant. Verse 22, the master says, I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant. You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in and reaping what I did not sow. Why then didn't you put my money on deposit so that when I came back I could have collected it with interest?

And in verse 24, the wicked servant has his mina taken away and given it to the one who has ten. And then there's this sting in the tail, verse 27, those enemies of mine who didn't want me to be king over them, bring them here and kill them in front of me.

So why do we hear about them here? Is it because the warning from Jesus is to all who would think of themselves as servants of the king that in fact this person, he looks like a servant but in fact he's not.

[ 25 : 23 ] He's described as a wicked servant. He ends up in the same condition as the subjects. His attitude to the king shows he never really knew him. He didn't like him.

He sort of believes in God but he stays on the sidelines because he doesn't really like God. So it's not that your good works get you to heaven, that's very clear, at the same time real faith in Jesus, heartfelt trust, that trust Jesus died for your sins will never be without works.

It's always accompanied by some work, some change of behavior that demonstrates that you're trusting Jesus. And this wicked servant represents someone who looked like a believer.

He was known by believers and he knew them but there was nothing to show for his faith. So let me ask, could you examine yourself with the sting in the tale of the parable?

Perhaps ask yourself, what do you really think of the king? And can he see in your life today some evidence that you do trust him and you're waiting hopefully for his return?

[ 26 : 38 ] So the parable looks as though it's got four kinds of people in it but really they divide into two. Those who trust the king so they serve him and those who don't like the king.

And it leaves us to ask, are we really on the king's side? If you're visiting here physically or at home, you're watching, tuning in today but you're still looking at Jesus, can I urge you, I know verse 27, the language is very shocking, it's shocking to hear, it's shocking to say but let me urge you to keep looking at who Jesus is to see if you think his claims are true.

And for those of us who are trusting him, let's ask ourselves, what are you really living for? What is the governing purpose that really drives your life?

Are you happy to be in your comfort zone or are you lining up your life behind God's purposes in the world? Jesus says, put my mina to work until I come back.

Martin Luther said he had two days in his diary, today and the day when Jesus returns. Living with purpose today because we know what's coming.

[ 27 : 57 ] Amen.