

The Full Meaning of Life - Part 1

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and the relationship with God in achieving eternal life and fulfillment.

Duration: 53:05

Scripture: Matthew 5:14, John 3:16, Acts 20:24, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 9:24, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Timothy 6:12

Topics: "Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the fire of remorse that has taken away joy from their life, but they have found peace with God. They discuss the tragedy of wasting opportunities to witness for God, especially when others are looking up to them. The speaker shares a personal story of a conference where they were asked to pray for someone, highlighting the importance of waking up to the potential accidents in life. They emphasize that every life has a big tragedy that only God can bear, and that God has a plan for every individual. The sermon concludes with a personal anecdote about a sign that said 'God has a plan for every life' and a story of how God answered a prayer for help during a difficult time.

Transcript

He went into the great metropolitan tabernacle in London, and it was too warm. And he'd been telling the custodians that they had to do something about it. He said, if I come in and find it's too warm again, I'll just break the windows.

So he walked down the aisle and took the head of his king and knocked out his pain. And then he went to the custodians and said, send me the bill. You'll have to pay for it next time.

He believed that fresh air was essential to getting the message. I never begin with a story. You know that.

I've been with you long enough. Never. But I am today.

Because rarely do I find any that I think are worthy to begin with. But maybe you'll say this one wasn't, too. I'd arrived in Omaha from Chicago, and Pastor was taking me to his home for the afternoon and evening.

And we picked up a missionary from Argentina that had come in from another direction at just about the same time. And the missionary told us this. He said that a friend was talking to an over-the-road, long-distance tractor-trailer driver, a man who'd get in the trailer in California with a load of fresh produce and drive it through to Boston.

And he was very proud of his profession. He was certain that it was an honorable one, and he was an expert. And he was telling about various situations and how he'd handled them.

And the one to whom he was speaking said, let me set a scene for you. He said, suppose you had left California with a load of fresh produce. You were coming over the mountains.

There was a lot of traffic coming up the left lane, and on your left was a sheer cliff of several hundred feet of solid rock. On your right were cars in front of you going rather slowly, and further right was a drop of about a thousand feet. And you touched the brakes and found you didn't have any brakes.

What would you do? And the driver thought for a moment and said, I'd wake Leroy. Well, who's Leroy? Well, he said, if I'm driving, Leroy's sleeping. He's my partner, and he's in that bump behind the cab, and I'd wake Leroy.

Well, why would you wake Leroy? What would he do? He said, well, you see, Leroy, he ain't never seen a real big accident. Laughter In September, I rather thought that maybe one of the things we could do in these sessions together would be to try to wake Leroy. Because it looks like we may have some accidents.

Perhaps we can avoid them, and perhaps we can't. It depends upon what we do with what we have. And what we have is all set forth, all measured, all given for us in the text that's going to engage us during these three sessions that we have together.

Or is it four, someone? Three. Three sessions. I'll just run it together a little.

John 3, 16. I'm going to give you a paraphrase of it now. I may have done this in the past, but I'm going to give it to you now.

And if you were here then and do remember it, you are far better than I think you are. Perhaps so. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not be wasted, but should begin to live now in the full meaning of life and go on living that way forever.

Now will you let me repeat it just from the portion that's changed? Whosoever believeth in him should not be wasted. You see, the whole idea of hell as we have it in the scripture, or at least in the New Testament, comes, strangely enough, from the city dump. Some of the teaching the Lord did on the subject was from the Mount of Olives, and if he was sitting on the western slope above the Garden of Gethsemane, he would have, as his plants went from the towers, the gate of Stephen, and then down to the gate, locked gate of Suleiman and David, and then past the temple site and on down the valley of the Kidron, he would have seen what was then the city dump.

Now obviously it didn't have to be as large as they have to be today. There weren't any refrigerator cases or automobiles, weren't even any bottles to speak of, and no tin cans certainly. But there would be some old clothing perhaps, there'd be some baskets that had given way, there'd be watermelon, squash, pumpkin rinds, and occasional dead animal, all dragged down to this little cove where the floodwaters had washed the sand away and the dirt away from the bank of the creek, and in this place they'd pile the refuse.

And you know what happens when you pile squash and watermelon rinds and animal carcasses. You're going to get spontaneous combustion. For some years we lived in Montclair, New Jersey, and the church I

pastored was in downtown New York City, and so every day that I went into the office I had to go across the New Jersey flats.

And this was interesting because the smoke ascended night and day, and sometimes worse than other times, but it was Gehenna, it was where the refuse was being consumed. And this would be the kind of a situation from which the New Testament concept of hell would come, or at least if not the concept, the means of communicating it, the illustration of it. There was certainly fire, and there was smoke, and the worms didn't cease their work.

And all that we've had described would, in a sense, be there. Now, obviously he's applying, using an illustration of means of keeping the community more or less sanitary, and applying it to the task God has of getting a certain class of people and keeping his community more or less sanitary. That is, people that are in sympathy with his government and interested in his aims and sharing his purposes and concerned about the same things that he is.

And there's another company of people that are moral anarchists and spiritual racketeers and are, well, the Bible says a sinner, and their sinners are traitors because they have betrayed just and proper government, and they're rebels because it's not merely an act of treason, but when one refuses to allow God to have his place in their life, they are committed to a lifetime of open rebellion. So a sinner is a traitor and a rebel, but this isn't all. He's also an anarchist because having refused just government, he then makes his own whim and fancy and pleasure the rule of his life.

And it doesn't stop there because he's also a transgressor, and when fences are put up to protect some from others, those who have no regard for the rights of others cross over, transgress, in pursuit of their pleasure at the expense of others with an inordinate improper self-love that says, I'll get what I want and I'll do what I want and I'll have what I want regardless of what it costs anybody else because my pleasure, even at the expense of God and others, is the supreme reason for my being, and I have made the choice to please myself. Now this is the essence of this thing that the Bible calls sin. And there's one other thing, it's enmity.

Strangely enough, the Bible says that the carnal mind, the person who's committed his mind, made the supreme choice of his life, and all of us have at the age of accountability. That became the basis of the government of our lives, please ourselves. He says the carnal mind is enmity against God, and say God is an enmity against man, but says that having made the choice to please ourselves, then the person becomes God's enemy, and the carnal mind is enmity against God, it's not subject to the law of God, indeed it can't be.

And so he's confronted with the problem of what is he going to do with these people, and we saw in the previous times together, he made in his image, made in his likeness, made for his pleasure, but we saw that the reason that he made man was to have someone like himself, with whom he could share all that he is, and all that he has, and all that he's doing, and all that he wants to do, and the only condition he said was that you should make my pleasure, my happiness, my joy, as much your supreme reason for being, as I have made your happiness, and your pleasure, and your joy, the reason for my being. But man broke that, and he says no, I'm not going to seek to please God, and satisfy him, and fulfill his desires and plans for himself and for me, I am going to be God, I'm going to decide how to be happy, I'm going to choose what to do to gratify myself, I will be God in my life, and that's the essence of sin. Now God's had to do something with this, and so he has said, the soul which sinneth, it shall die.

And we've seen several aspects of it. One, we've seen that he died physically. God made us so that our cells of our bodies are renewed every, well some physiologists said every seven days, every seven years, but every cell, including the enamel on our teeth, is renewed over a given period of time, and some very, very rapidly.

And apparently God built in a principle of continuous repair, so that 960 years would not be exceptional, and no reason really why it should have, Methuselah should have died then, other than that was just the year before the flood, and so on. But there was no real reason why physically he should have had to die, because there's a built-in principle of renewal. It's a perplexed scientist, why do people get old? But God put that principle, and he reversed certain things, so that we do get old.

And physical death, all have died, death is passed upon all, more than all have sinned. And that's one of the consequences. Then the second consequence is legal death.

And that is the forfeiture of the right to expect God to bless. We have no claim upon God except that he should be just when we stand before him in judgment. Absolutely the only thing that a traitor and a rebel and an anarchist can ask of God is, when you judge me, be just.

There's not much consolation or comfort in that, for most of us who have any degree of awareness of ourselves. And the other aspect is spiritual death. That is, we're made for God, we're made to know him, to enjoy him, but because of this crime called sin, God has said, I will not reveal myself to man.

Yet we have all the equipment with which to know God. But because of this crime, this thing of choosing, making the supreme choice of our life, to please ourselves, this attitude toward God, God does not reveal himself. And then there is the fourth aspect, and that's eternal separation.

Now in each case, death means separation from, not annihilation of. Never does it mean cessation of being, but a changed situation. A changed relationship.

Now that is implied in pariah. That ultimate destiny, that place that God has had to provide, where those who deem themselves worthy of nothing more than God's continued anger, those who feel, who are so committed to this attitude of rebellion and treason and anarchy, that all the overtures that God has made, and all the petitions that he has brought, leave them implacable and unmoved, and they say, no, I am determined to reap the full reward for my crimes. And this is the attitude of the impenitent person, that one who dies as he lives, an open defiant rebellion against God.

And so the Lord Jesus, in talking to people, said, now you see there, that's the place. Now what a tragedy, what an indescribable tragedy it is, for someone whom God has loved so much as to give his son, to so spurn all of the overtures of that love, as to say, I consider myself to be so right, in this defiance of just and proper government and this career of treason, that I am pleased to go on in an attitude that makes it mandatory for just government to exercise the full sanctions of law upon me, and courageously and with honor I therefore march out to the doom that I feel I have earned. Now, they may not say it, but in effect, that is what the impenitent sinner is doing, that every day he lives, because he hasn't any guarantee as to how many more it's going to be.

He's simply saying, this is what I consider I have earned. I deserve God's wrath, and I insist upon being paid it, because I have refused and spurned his love. Now, God loved the world, and he gave his son, that whosoever believes in him should not be wasted.

One of the most astounding things about man is the fact that by no, no kind of calculation could you ever figure that man was made for a 70-year span. I've been reading lately, since I talked with you earlier about man, about the human brain, and what some of the scientists have seen and thought of it, this magnificent, magnificent instrument God's given us, and all the aspects of our personality demand an eternity. And one of the things that troubles us when we get to the point where we realize our potential and the directions it could be applied, is that we have to choose when there are so many exciting things we'd like to do.

Well, God built that into us, and he also built the opportunity for fulfillment. But for one to say, by their attitude, I am determined to reap what I have sown, and to receive what I have earned, and go out to this refuge pit of the universe, this I have as my goal for being. Now, no one is foolish enough to say that.

I remember talking to a young chap who was very adamant in his rejection of Christ. And I drew up a contract, and I put his name and the date and the place and all the other paraphernalia to make it sound legal. I do hereby relinquish all part and claim in the gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ, and in the death of Jesus Christ for me.

As of today, herefore, as long as I shall live, I never again will make any petition to God for grace, for mercy, or for pardon, and I do gladly accept the consequence of my deeds, and indicate my determination to go out of life as I am today. I therefore relinquish all right and all part in the death of Jesus Christ. And I said, would you sign it? Oh, of course not.

Well, why not? That's what you've been saying. Why not make it legal, and then when anybody comes like I am to talk with you, you can pull this out and say it's contractually settled, and don't bother me. Oh, I wouldn't do that.

Well, why not? Well, someday. You know, someday I may, I may. But this is what people do by their attitudes.

They draw a contract, and they sign it in the morning, and reaffirm it at night, and go on so living. Now, what a tragedy, what a colossal waste it is for someone to die and spend eternity in that refuge. That's the illustration that he used.

Not whosoever believeth in him should not be wasted. Know how important it is to us this morning, each of us, to look well. You know what a tragedy it's going to be that so many people miss heaven by 18 inches? You know that? They got it all up here, and they haven't got it down here.

It didn't say with the head man believeth, and assumes that he's righteous. It isn't it. It says with the heart man believeth.

And the heart, of course, is the whole being. That's why we read that thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and elsewhere it says, and strength. The essence of sin is self-love, and the essence of repentance is faith, and faith is the commitment to seek God's pleasure and joy, for that's the meaning of the word love.

Now, what an important thing it is for everyone here to realize that we have believed with a heart, not just a box full of notions that we picked up in our youth, or a bundle of ideas that we've been toting for years, or a presumption that we made because we did something, but to be able to say, I know whom I have. I know I have received him. That's imperative.

Now, the next aspect of this way. That's part of John 3, 6, but there's another terribly important aspect of it, and that is the fact that we are made for God. Nothing in the universe can complete or fulfill us but God.

Oh, how tender and how loving of him that when he made us, he used a form and a last so big that nothing can fill us and complete us and satisfy us but God. He made for us. And for you to live one day without him is a waste, and to have lived this far without him is a colossal waste, because nothing can complete us, nothing can fulfill us, nothing can make us happy but God.

Even if God were to send you a contract saying that he's guaranteed you a place in heaven, and you had it, and you say, when I die, I know that I'll go to heaven, and he didn't walk with you today, and you didn't enjoy a fellowship with him today, today is wasted, because you weren't just made to work and to eat and to sleep and to do all the other things that are part of our life. We're made for God. Now, here in time, to know him, to enjoy him, and that's why, one of the reasons he gave his son, that if we would believe on him, we wouldn't have to waste today in some anticipation of heaven when we die.

I sit on platforms all over the country and watch people sing, and you know, when by his grace I shall look on his face, that will be glory for me. And you know from the wistfulness and the kind of emptiness that there's not going to be a moment of it till when either, because it's like the lady in prayer meeting. She said, 30 years I go, I believed on Jesus Christ, and I'm determined to hold out to the bitter end.

And she wasn't mincing words either. This is what it had been. It had been a presentation of Christ and a receiving of him, but no one had gone on to explain that when the Lord Jesus was given by the Father and came into time, his destination wasn't Nazareth.

If we go back and rethink the Christmas scene again, see the creche the children have built, as our daughter has put up in our home and has traditionally done, and we watch all of this return to Bethlehem. But that wasn't his destination when he came. Nor was it a refugee's home in Egypt.

That wasn't his. Nor was it the carpenter's home in Nazareth, to which he returned when he was eight or so. Have you visited Nazareth and gone down into that Nabatean duplex? Lower level and then the upper level and then the carpenter's shop above it.

That wasn't his destination. That was just his lodging place. Long time, maybe 22 years that he was there, living, working, following the trade, first as an apprentice and then as a journeyman master carpenter.

But that wasn't why he came into the world to spend 22 years at Nazareth. Nor Capernaum, the city that he loved, received him. Not like Nazareth that wanted to stone him.

But that wasn't his destination. Nor Jerusalem, where he went and taught over which he wept. Nor the place where he died and the cross on which he died.

That wasn't his destination. Nor the tomb where they buried him. Nor even the right hand of the father to which he ascended.

That wasn't his destination. He'd been there from eternity past. He didn't need to make this long trip to arrive there.

He was there. Do you know why he made that pilgrimage through time? I'll tell you. He says, I will dwell in them and I will walk in them and I'll be a father unto them.

The reason he left heaven and came into earth wasn't just to take us where he is when we die. It was so that he could dwell in us and walk in us. He could live with us now.

You see, salvation is not a scheme. Salvation is not a plan. It's not a decision.

It's not a list of scripture verses nor a system of doctrine. Salvation is a person. Now, David knew that.

David said, Jehovah, in Psalm 27, is my light and my salvation. And when I was a Bible school student and read that, I thought poor old David needed the course in the analysis that I had. We could have straightened him out.

But he would have said, Jehovah is my light and sends my salvation. That's not so. You can't send life.

Life is in Christ when Christ who is our life shall appear. He that hath the Son hath life. Because eternal life is him.

And if you have him, you have life. There's not something he sends. It's not an extension of what we had before.

It's himself. And that's why Paul writing to the church at Corinth said, Examine yourself whether you be in the faith. Prove yourself.

Know you're not your own self. Know how that Christ be in you except you be reprobate. Salvation is a person.

Not a scheme, not a system, not a doctrine, not a decision, but a person. And that was what his purpose was when he left heaven so that he could dwell in us and walk in us. It's Christ in you.

Not in the Christmas story. Not in John 3.16. Not in history. Not in heaven.

It's Christ in you. The hope of glory. Well, now, the question is how does he get in you? Well, unto as many as receive him.

You receive him. And receiving him is to receive him as he is presented. We'll see in further studies how he is presented.

But to receive him is the means by which we live. Now, so to receive Christ and then to know that he is in us is the beginning. Then to cultivate and develop and nurture that relationship with him is the continuance.

And it's extremely important for us to realize that to live without knowing his indwelling presence is to waste the day and the privilege that's now. And how many there are that endure the dreary now because of the promise of the then. I don't want that.

I don't want my Christian life to begin when everybody's weeping over me. I want it to begin now while they can enjoy it with me. You know, not my Christian life but my joyous life.

I'd like to have it live today, the relationship with him. And that's his purpose. Whosoever believeth in him should not waste one day but can have the joy of his indwelling presence now.

Now, how important this is. How important it is to your families and to your friends and the people with whom you work. And how important it is to the world.

We're talking about waking Leroy. Well, one of the things we've got to do, the Leroy I'd like to wake is the Leroy right here that's been asleep when you realize that in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And Christ crucified is made unto us the wisdom of God and the power of God.

And if Jesus Christ is in you, you have access to infinite intelligence and to unlimited power. And the situations you have and the responsibilities that are upon you, the tragedies in your home or in the homes of those dear to you, tragedies the weight of which you carry are so enormous that the only way that you can possibly ever have them solved is to have Jesus Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge take over. Because in every life here, there's a tragedy so big, so enormous, so heavy that the only one who can bear it is someone who has unlimited power and infinite intelligence.

I make that statement without, up till this point, having been successfully contradicted. Every holy man has that kind of a problem in him. Only Christ is enough.

And you've read that little sign, haven't you? Christ is the answer. Oh, how many times we accept fallacies. You know what a fallacy? It's just a half-truth.

Just a half-truth. And the fact to say Christ is the answer is a fallacy. It's not correct.

Well, he has infinite intelligence, and he has unlimited power, but it still is incorrect to say he's the answer. It's correct to say Christ has the answer, because he has infinite intelligence, and he has unlimited power, and he has you. And you are the channel by which his power and by which his wisdom is going to be mediated into the affairs of man.

But don't say he is. Put yourself in Noah's position. God says there's going to come a flood.

Noah says to his family, well, we don't need to worry. God is the answer. He'd have drowned it like the rest of those rascals.

No, no. God, sure, God had the answer, but the answer was Noah, as well as a plan for an ark, and 120 years in which for slow motion to take over and succeed. Because I don't think he was very enthusiastic about building a boat on the top of a mountain.

Would you be? Just enough obedience to keep from getting clobbered, that's all. And no wonder he put it off. Nobody down there is saying, hurry, Noah, let's get this boat built.

No, sir. He's not going to do that. But anyway, it's 120 years, and that's three times judgment.

Forty years is a period that God allows people. In this case, he gave him three periods to try to see what was right. See, Noah was the answer, and you're the answer.

Now, how are you there? Only when Jesus Christ is in you. Then you have access to all of his intelligence and to all of his power. And for you to live with the needs and the tragedies and the problems that you're confronting, and not to use or to be available to him to use you in mediating or channeling his infinite intelligence and his unlimited power, means that you are indeed wasting.

Wasting the precious joy of living in fellowship with him. What a tragedy. To have Christ in you and not have paid any attention to how he you can have access to and use of, or he can have, through you, bring his intelligence and his power to bear on the problems in the homes and lives of the people that are dear to him.

So that's all implicit in God so loved the world that whosoever believeth in him should not waste, should not waste the time that he's been given when he could be the means by which God could channel his power. Then there's another application of this. And that is, at this point, influence with your families, with your friends, with your neighbors.

What a tremendous thing it is to say, yes, I know that back at a certain point in time Jesus Christ came into my heart. And the past is finished, it's gone. The gray cancer of memory that just consumed me is gone.

The fire of remorse that took the joy out of the days that should have been filled with joy, that's gone. I have peace with God. But what a, that's marvelous, but what a tragedy it is to have children looking to you and friends looking to you and yet wasting the opportunity of witnessing for him.

Because we haven't believed on him in relation to that responsibility of our life witness where we are. I was out at a conference in Ohio, a place called Beulah Beach, Ohio, which was one of the Christian Missionary Alliance conference grounds. And I spoke one week in the morning Bible hour and the second week in the afternoon hour.

And one evening in the second week, or one day in the first week, the young people's worker said to us at the worker's table, I wish you'd pray for so-and-so and name the son of one of the very prominent late families that was there working at the, during the conference. And in this second week, one evening, after service was over, I was visiting with friends in the hall where we'd been meeting and a young man came up and tapped my shoulder and said, Mr. Redead, could you come over to the young people's meeting room? And I said, well, I could, but why? Well, he said, there's so-and-so and he named this boy, wants to talk to you. So I went with him and came into the youth tabernacle and went up to the front and to a little room at the side.

And when I got in, there were three or four people. And obviously the young man seated there was the one to whom they were focusing their attention. He talked with whom they were talking.

And when he saw me, he said, hey, you guys, would you all get out? I want to talk to the preacher. So they went and I sat down across from him at this little table. He said, the first thing he said was, do you know my folks? I said, yes, not well, but I know them.

And then he said, do you know they're the biggest hypocrites in the whole world? I said, no, I didn't know that. I never thought that. Well, he said, they are.

When they're with you and the preacher, boy, butter wouldn't melt in their mouth. They're just so nice and sweet, but at home, oh, at home, criticism of each other and sarcasm and fighting with each other and tearing at one another. And then it spills over onto us and we can't do anything right.

And they go to church and the car, the mother sits as far as she can at her side and dad's over there and they don't say a word and they talk to us real warm and don't look at each other. And then they get there and sing, oh, how I love Jesus. And I just, Mr. Reed, and I just, just so sick.

He said, I just came here because I had to to keep some kind of peace. And all I've been wanting to do is just to get by, just to endure until I got old enough to leave home. But Mr. Reed, as I've been here this week, I found out how bad I am.

I found out some of the things I could do and I guess if I have an opportunity, I will do it. And I'm afraid of me. I'm afraid of the kind of person I could be, especially with my reactions.

And he said, Mr. Reed, I need Jesus. Then he broke, tears ran down his cheeks. But he said, I'm just afraid that if he hasn't been able to do any better than that with my father and mother, he won't be able to do what I need either.

He started to cry. Now listen, if I had gone to those people and said, have you received Jesus Christ as your Savior? They said, yes. If you die, will you go to? Yes.

I wouldn't argue with them. But what they didn't realize was they were wasting every day of their life as far as those sons were concerned. Because they never realized that the Lord Jesus didn't just die to save them from the penalty of what he'd done.

He died to save them from the tyranny of their own personalities and their own traits and their dispositions and their habits and their attitudes. And because they hadn't realized how big it was that whosoever believeth in him should not be wasted in any area of their life. Not just ultimately.

Not just living without the joy of living in him and him in us, but wasting the influence and the opportunity and the testimony. Do you know anybody that might have a problem like this? If you do, I don't want to get personal, but I'd like to talk to your neighbors a little bit. That would help me to find out whether I'm... You know, someone said if you shoot into enough brush piles, you'll scare out a rabbit now and then.

If I'm getting anywhere near to scaring out a rabbit here, let me tell you that the Lord Jesus didn't just die for you, he died as you. And we've been talking about the fact that there were two people on that cross, Christ and you. And that he didn't just want you to come and stand at the outside and see him dying for you and receive him as the one that paid the penalty of the past and go in through that cross into this life of faith and trust and peace.

But when you got in, he wanted you to turn around and look across to the inside and see yourself on the back of it, crucified with him. And he wanted you to believe just as much that you died with him as you believe that he died for you. And in so believing, be released from the tyranny of your personality and traits and habits and attitudes.

That whosoever believeth in him should not be wasted because they haven't found the provision that he made to save us from our disposition. Well that's pretty good, that's great to think that he was that thoughtful and that inclusive in the gift of his son. But there's something else that we have to see at this point.

And that is God loved the world and he gave his son that whosoever believeth in him should not finish their life and have to look back on it and say as successful as I was, I was a failure because I missed God's plan for my life. Well I firmly believe that God has a plan for every life. When I was a boy in the First Baptist Church in Anoka, Minnesota, we had a downstairs meeting room, youth room, under the floor at that time sloped and the beams were still open and it was a wretched, cobwebby, dusty place.

And someone had taken a little cardboard sign and thumbtacked it up on one of the beams and the spiders and the dust and the soot had gotten over it. But I was there and I looked up one day and I saw it. And this is what it says, God has a plan for every life.

My father had lost his business in the depression. We were living on a sand farm and had four years of drought. Got to Christmas one year in 1934.

There wasn't any money for a tree or a present or a thing. And I went out in the woods and knelt over a stump and cried out to God to send us something. And a man came in at four o'clock on Christmas Eve and bought two and a half cords of wood.

That's four by four by eight. That was a truckload and he paid us ten dollars. My father came to me and said, son, this is yours.

You've been praying for it. Get us a Christmas. Well, I got the old Essex started and went off into town.

And that wasn't a little thing. I tell you, it took a team of horses 45 minutes dragging the thing around the yard to get it going. So when I say that, I want you to know that means something to this boy.

And I went in and I bought a Christmas tree and I bought some candy canes and I bought some candles. And I bought a present from everybody, including the hired man, to everybody and came back with 98 cents change. But don't complain about inflation, friend.

Man, how hard it was to get ten bucks. Mother said, here's 50 cents. Go buy ten pounds of hamburger and you can have the nickel for yourself.

But I'd rather have it today than the way we had it then because 50 cents was a big piece of money. Our hired man worked for 31 days those months that had 31 and 30 the rest for \$15 in his boardroom. And half the time we couldn't pay him.

So when I hear anybody complain, I just want to close my ears and run to hide. That was a situation when I looked up and saw God has a plan for every life. And I remember going back home and kneeling down by my bed upstairs in a cold, unheated room in the wintertime.

First time I saw it. And I said, oh God, if you've got it, I want it. You don't even have to bother telling me what it is.

Because I'm just in no place to make any of my own that could amount to anything. And if you've done it, then I have to know all that you are went into it, all your wisdom went into it, and all your love went into it, and your power is available for it, and I want it. And I'm committing myself here and now to take it, whatever it is.

Now, I believe that God so loved the world that he gave his son that if we believe on him, that plan that he made before he made the world, we can have. And I think the only successful person is going to be the one like Saul Paul who can say when he sees the Lord Jesus, I've finished the course. What course? That plan that he made.

You say, but boy, I wish I'd have heard that when I was a teenager. You ought to be speaking to them. Now, wait a minute.

I'm not talking to you about the great I might have been. I'm talking to you about the great I am. I'm talking to you about the one whose plan begins today and will restore all the years the locusts have eaten.

And your plan, his plan begins now, and if you want it, you can have it, and you can finish the course because he has the computer of his infinite intelligence that constantly has been revising the plan so that it becomes pertinent to today. Whosoever believeth in him should not have just been successful by which means the world measures success and miss the plan that he has for our lives. When all of that is just around that little word that whosoever believeth in him should not be wasted, but should begin to live now in the meaning of life, in the full meaning of life, and go on living that way forever.

Father, we're so grateful that you love the world, and we're part of it. There wasn't anything in us that called forth your love, nothing in us that we can see that would make us expect it, certainly nothing that we could deserve it. Your wrath we could deserve and expect, but not your love.

And when we read, Lord, that you love the world and gave your Son, our hearts stop, miss a beat. But Father, when we hear the Lord Jesus in his high priestly prayer, say, Father, that the world may know that thou hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. We bow before thee, and we're overwhelmed, Lord, we're speechless in silence in your presence, to think that you loved us the way you loved the Lord Jesus.

O Grandfather, that being the heirs of such love, we shall not waste any part of the privilege and the opportunity that we have. Whosoever believeth in him should not be wasted. And Father, if there are some here today who do not know him whom to know his like, might this be the hour when they open their hearts and say, Thank you for this time together in Jesus.

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