

Weary of Wandering
Matthew 25: 14-30, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Well brothers and sisters, this morning we are concluding the Weary and Burdened series that we've been focusing on over Jan and Feb. And although I know this has been a helpful series for many of you, if it were to go on much longer... I confess that I would begin to feel weary and burdened by it.

But, fortunately for me, as I've come to Jesus to seek His guidance on what to preach on over the next few months, He's given me rest from this topic and He would have us focus on growing in some of the basics of the Christian faith, after celebrating Good Friday and Easter at end of March.

So, our upcoming series in March is going to be Basic Training for Christians, getting back to some of the basics about God's plan for us, the importance of Jesus in that plan and the centrality of scripture...

We will continue with this Basic Training after Easter as well in April and May and June by going through the book of James –

which is just full of practical wisdom for basic training on day-to-day for Christian living.

Now, I'm sharing all these details with you brothers and sisters – not just to pique your interest in what's coming up - but to give you an example of how it's better to have a purpose and plan and a clear sense of direction for something important, such as Valleyview's teaching ministry.

You would probably feel... a bit disappointed - to find out your minister is just selecting random texts and topics each week with no sense of purpose or plan or preparation for how the messages can work with what the Spirit is doing in your life.

It's kind of like the old Scottish minister, pastor Angus McClyde who was feeling a bit weary and burdened by all his weekly sermon study and preparation for preaching who went to a mid-week revival meeting one evening. At the revival he saw how leaders simply asked the Holy Spirit to give them the Word to preach for the meeting, and then someone just got up and preached a message.

Pastor Angus thought, “Wow, if I can do that it would free up a lot of time during the week – I could even get in a few more rounds of golf!” So, the following Sunday he stepped up to the pulpit to deliver his message and He prayed *“Holy Spirit – what’s the word this morning?”* And the Holy Spirit said to him *“Angus... you’re a lazy pastor!”*

You see brothers and sisters there are times when we wander around without a purpose or plan or a clear direction in our lives - because we’re a bit lazy about it... but there are other times when we just can’t seem to find that focus and we’re wandering about in life with no sense of purpose and direction – and when this goes on for too long, we become weary of wandering.

Maybe you’re a young adult trying to decide what to do after graduating high school, trying to figure out a direction for your life... and you can’t find something that appeals to you.

Or maybe you did find a direction for your life and you’ve been hard at work pursuing over the past ten years but its

starting to become repetitive, monotonous, unfulfilling and you want something more exciting and challenging...

Or maybe you’re finding that you have an emptiness inside that all the success and the accomplishments of life are not able to fill, you are looking at your legacy and wondering if you will leave anything significant once you are gone?

Or maybe things have changed for you, you’ve finished a one phase of life and you’re starting a new one; like moving to a new country, or being an empty nester, retiring, being widowed or no longer having your parents around. You had a good sense of purpose and direction in your previous stage of life... but in this new phase – you can’t find your bearings.

Whatever your situation brothers and sisters, you are searching for a purpose and a plan and a clear direction, but you are not finding what you are looking for – and you have become weary of wandering. If this is your struggle this morning brothers and sisters, then Jesus’ words in Matt 11:28

are for you! *“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest!”*

So, come to Jesus and give him your weariness of wandering around looking for a purpose and a direction in life. Come to Him in prayer and tell Him what you have been looking for and ask Him to give that to you. It seems like such a basic advice... but are we coming to Jesus to pray about these things?

Think about how we just go about our daily lives, doing all the regular things we do, work, school, shopping, playing, going places, hanging out and so on... without even wondering or asking if that is what we should be doing? Confirming that is Jesus’ plan for us, or if He has something else for us instead?

Perhaps our weariness in wandering about in life with no purpose is part of the way that Jesus is going to get our attention so that we start a much more intentional relationship with Him, talking to Him about our lives, telling Him what we need, what we’re struggling with and so on.

Sometimes brothers and sisters, we are not finding the rest we need, we don’t have the plan and the purpose and the direction we are seeking – simply because we’re not asking Jesus for it. As James 4:2 says *“you do not have... because you do not ask God!”*

So, if you are weary of wandering with no plan or purpose... PRAY! Pray to Jesus and ask Him for rest. But then listen to what Jesus has to say to you – and the good news here brothers and sisters is that Jesus already has an answer ready for you before you even pray this prayer.

That’s because Jesus speaks directly and clearly to us today through the scripture because it is God’s Word and Jesus is the Word of God. There is so much that the scripture says to us about purpose and plans and direction for our lives that the challenge is not so much trying to listen to what Jesus will say to us in response to our prayer, but more so – again as we find in the book of James – obeying it. James 1:22 says *“Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves, do what it says!”*

So, let's look at what the scripture says to us about our purpose and plans the direction of our lives, and it starts right at the beginning of scripture in Genesis 1:27-28 where God creates human beings as male and female and blesses them and gives us our purpose *"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

Jesus builds on this in Mark 10:6 when he says *"at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'" "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."*

So, in broad terms brothers and sisters, our purpose and plan for life is to start families, rule over God's creation as stewards, and – as we learned last week – raise our children in the way they should go - so when they are older they will not depart from it. (Prov 22:6)

And it's good to be reminded of this foundational truth about what it means to be human, to be created in God's image as stewards.

Because we live in a culture that says to be human is to be happy, to find whatever makes you happy. To be human is to make your own truth and create your own identity to be whatever you want to be – as long as, and for as long as, it makes you happy.

But this is why we are weary and burdened and wandering, searching for a purpose and plan and a direction for life because such things cannot ultimately come from creatures like ourselves – they come from our creator.

So, we need to hear our Genesis purpose proclaimed and reaffirmed to encourage us in it, and help us stand firm upon it as our bedrock of self-understanding. Broadly speaking brothers and sisters this is our plan and purpose and direction for life and the Holy Spirit reaffirms this for us today in order

to give us rest from wondering and wandering about who we are and what we should be doing.

But lest you still feel weary and burdened by the broad scope of this foundational purpose, take heart because Prov 22:6 has some good news for us. Training a child in the way they should go is not only about raising them according to God's revealed laws and gospel in scripture, it's also raising them according to how the Word of God has created them and reveals itself as they grow and develop – and this is true for all of us.

This truth is echoed in Jesus' parable of the talents where the Master gives His servants the responsibilities to look after different amounts of money while He is gone.

The sums of money can represent the different creational aptitudes and skills and abilities that we are each gifted with or have the capacity to develop and learn. These reveal themselves to us as over time as we study and learn and try new things and discover what we enjoy and succeed at.

So, brothers and sisters, the Lord can answer your prayer for purpose and plan and direction through things like skills and abilities testing, personality surveys and other tools that we can use to narrow down and discover what we are good at and what we should focus on and pursue – not just as a job to pay bills, or as a career for success, but as a calling.

A job or career is ok... but if you want purpose and a plan for your life ask the Lord for a calling. Because a calling takes a job or a career and turns it into what you do to steward and take care of and develop some part of God's creation so that when the Master returns you can say *"See you gave me 10 talents and I have gained 10 more... you gave me 5 talents and I have gained 5 more!"*

Now what this looks like might be some specific innovations and developments that you were responsible for, or it might be growth or expanding operations in your sector, or perhaps better quality of products and service, making something more responsible in its environmental impact or improving how sustainable it might be, improving care or providing more

options... or perhaps just plain old actual capital investment growth. You get the picture – its about investing who God made you to be so it results in growth as you steward His creation.

But there's also the aspect of investing who you are and what God has given you in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus says to us in Matt 6:19 *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”*

Now don't misunderstand this as contradicting what we just learned about having a calling to steward some part of God's creation here on earth, what Jesus is saying is that there is another layer to being a steward of the earth where you are directing what you do in your calling back to God in heaven as an act of worship.

You see that was the original purpose of God's command to start families and develop the creation – that we would do this for His glory and direct it towards Him as praise and worship. That's why we say things like *“all of life is worship!”*

Its not just the time of music and singing that we do on Sunday morning. That is singing praise to God, it's expressing our feelings of love and adoration to Him, we are enthusiastically focused on Him – and its is a part of worship, but worship is in fact ALL of our life. It's from one Sunday service to the next and all that happens in between.

Brothers and sisters, as Christians our purpose and plan and direction in life has that deeper layer, that more profound aspect to it where we are called to take everything that we are doing in life and direct it to God as an act of worship.

This happens through being obedient to God's laws and creational designs for different areas of our life – obeying the Ten Commandments is a good way to start this... acknowledging that the scientific laws of nature are really God's Word for His creation is another way to honor Him.

It happens through taking the blessings and the resources that He puts us in charge of, and directing them to fund and support His Church and other organizations or people that

promote the gospel, Christian discipleship, and helping the poor and needy and those who are genuinely oppressed - IN JESUS NAME... that's important to ensure.

So, we also consecrate our daily activity to God as worship through prayer. Before we start something, we can pray and tell God we are offering Him what we are doing, through Jesus, as worship and ask Him to accept it as such because we offer it in Jesus' name. Brothers and sisters this is our Kingdom calling.

And of course, offering our daily lives as worship so as to store up treasure in heaven is also about how we use the spiritual gifts – or as they are more biblically called, grace gifts from the Holy Spirit to fulfill Jesus' calling on us from Matt 28:19-20 where we are commanded...

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

So we should also understand Jesus' parable of the talents in this way as well. That the varying amounts of money the master gives each servant represents the different gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to each person in the body of Christ for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ and growing it through making disciples.

So, if you are a part of the Church – you belong to Jesus – then you also have a purpose and direction for your life which is making disciples of all nations, and you have been given at least one grace gift to equip you for that task, that great commission which we can call our Church calling.

And taking the lesson of the parable of the talents to heart in this regard is that sometimes we are weary of wandering and lacking a purpose and clear direction... not because we're confused or uncertain about what to choose, but because our sin makes us disobedient.

Just like the lazy servant in the parable, our sin makes us resent the responsibility that Jesus gives us in commanding us

to go make disciples, and we neglect and bury the grace gift that the Holy Spirit has equipped us with.

Brothers and sisters, we need to accept our Church calling as an equal part of our purpose and direction in our lives and plan out how we will use and invest the grace gifts that we have been given so that we can show the Lord on His return, or when we stand before Him when we pass from this life into the next, that we invested His grace gifts into the lives of people and His grace has been multiplied in their lives and in the lives of people whom they have discipled.

“You gave me only 1 grace gift Lord, but see I have gained 2 disciples with it...” or 3 or 4... the point is you’ve pursued the purpose which we have in our Church calling.

So you see brothers and sisters, Jesus speaks to us from the scriptures to make us aware that there is a three-fold purpose and plan and direction for our life, that will give us rest from wandering; we have our Creational Calling, our Kingdom Calling and our Church Calling.

And for those of you who are familiar with how we talk about the three colors of spirituality and Trinitarian theology here at Valleyview... you might say that what we have here are the Three colors of our purpose, and our three callings correspond to knowing God as Creator, Jesus as Savior and King and the Holy Spirit as the transformer.

And so understanding it this way helps us to realize that all three callings are connected to each other and influence each other even though they have different things they are focused on, and while one calling may stand out for us in a particular phase of life, we must always have the other two callings connected to it in a supporting and shaping role.

So, in this way brothers and sisters we can see how growing in knowledge and understanding of God and who He is as a Three-in-one, one-in-three God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit... as we get to know God we get to know ourselves and our purpose and we find rest from wandering around in life with no sense of direction or a plan.

And my prayer this morning is that the Holy Spirit will take some part of this message to speak to where you need that sense of purpose and plan and direction for your life and that you will respond in obedience and take some concrete steps to start living out that purpose in your life.

Maybe finding out about our creational calling will help you pick your course of studies or work or find a trade after high school, or maybe take a skills or personality course to find out what you are good at and what part of God's creation you should train to begin stewarding.

Maybe you always thought about getting married as something that just sort of happens if you keep dating someone and you never break up, so you just kind of get married as the apex experience of how much you are in love.

You never realized marriage is what God created for our purpose of starting families and raising children in the ways of the Lord – but now you do. And just fyi – this is what we refer to as good old-fashioned disciple making.

And maybe you realize now that you need to find someone who understands this purpose in life and wants to pursue it with you. Maybe you're starting to understand this is foundational for a good marriage and family life, far more so than what our culture calls "*romance and love.*"

Or maybe you will do something to change your current job or your career into a Kingdom calling... you'll start looking for ways to be obedient to God's design for the area of His creation that you are working with... you'll start praying regularly at the start of your shift, or before a meeting, or when your building something, to dedicate and consecrate your work - offering it to God as an offering of worship in the name of Jesus.

Or maybe you'll be looking at your resources and finances and how you can use them to support feeding the poor and helping the homeless or standing up for people who can't stand up for themselves, in Jesus name...

Or maybe you'll direct more of your resources towards your Church calling, helping your church to coordinate and organize and train and encourage all the people who are a part of it to work together – using all the grace gifts to make disciples.

Maybe you'll do something to try and figure out which grace-gift the Holy Spirit has given you to use to participate in that disciple-making task? Is it the gift of teaching, healing, evangelism, giving, serving others, receiving words of knowledge...

Or maybe you want to know more about grace-gifts and you'll ask your pastor to send you all his sermons about that topic after the service this morning so you can read up on it...

Or maybe you'll step into a responsibility to use your gifts in some ministry in the church... hospitality, children's and youth ministry, the music ministry, or inviting others to come to church or sharing the good news about Jesus Christ and our purpose in life with the people God puts in your path...

The real challenge for us now brothers and sisters, is not that we don't have a purpose and the plan and a direction for our lives but whether or not we will take actual steps to follow that purpose and plan that Jesus gives us in scripture.

As I mentioned earlier, it's not so much about listening to what the purpose and plan for us is, rather it's what James 1:22 says being about being obedient to it. *"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves, do what it says!"*

So brothers and sisters, there is no need to be weary from wandering with no purpose or plan or direction in life if you will but come to Jesus and obey Him. He will not only give you rest – He will give you a three-fold purpose, your creational calling, your kingdom calling and your church calling that will take you all the way through this life and into the next.

So come to Jesus, all you who are weary and burdened and he will give you rest! Amen.