



Life on Purpose Ephesians

Sermon Notes

Ephesians 6.18 - 20

In Ephesians Paul says that we are all made for a purpose.

God has a purpose, which he is working out over time, "God made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect **when the times reach their fulfilment** – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ." 1.9- 10

God has a purpose, and he hasn't finished yet; but as we look back can we see **signs of the kingdom of God coming?** Can we see times when God's purpose has been advance in history? (or times when it has gone backwards?)

Signs of God's kingdom coming in church growth and renewal movements

- Rapid Church growth from 30AD - 312AD, by which time 10% of the Roman Empire were Christians. At the start of the Day of Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection there were only 120 disciples in Jerusalem.
- The growth of Christendom in Europe was a mixed blessing: the Christian gospel was established in European institutions & culture; churches and cathedrals were built everywhere; but many Kings and Popes were not very Christian, and the gospel became obscured by superstition and folk religion.
- The reformation of the Church beginning with Martin Luther in 1517. The gospel was recovered, the bible was translated and printed.
- The 18th Century revival of the Church in Britain: Wesley, Whitefield, the Methodists and the Evangelicals in the Church of England.
- The World Missions movement in the Victorian age, the 19th Century, when thousands of missionaries took the gospel to Africa and Asia and South America.
- The Pentecostal movement, beginning in Los Angeles 1906, with 'the Azusa Street revival'. It was a spontaneous movement of the Spirit, in which biblical spiritual experiences were recovered. This movement impacted both black and white, uniting the Church across racial divides. It has spread rapidly across the world and Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches are the fastest growing.

Questions

1. Do you agree that we can see progress in the advancement of God's overall purpose for the world and humanity?

Signs of God's Kingdom in the 20th & 21st Century

- The failure of Fascism, Nazism, Communism
- Scientific & technical & medical progress; increases in literacy and education worldwide.
- Globalisation, trade agreements, increased prosperity, and the sharing of that increased prosperity with a growing concern for fair trade and equality (E.g. the Millennium Development Goals; absolute poverty has halved since 2000)
- The recognition of Human rights and Women's rights.
- The increase of international travel and social interaction (E.g. The Olympic movement, the World Cup, Etc.) and International agreements and Law.
- Increased unity of the Church, the ecumenical movement, better relationships between different faiths (in some places).

Many huge problems and challenges remain, of course, and they always will, until Christ returns; here are some of them:

- Global warming, unstable weather patterns, and protecting the environment as a safe place for future generations and for threatened species.
- Gross inequalities of opportunity, and inefficient use of resources.
- The Middle East- political & religious conflicts.
- Religious terrorism.
- Failed states & lawlessness.
- Refugees, fleeing from failed states, to Europe.
- All the people groups still unreached with the gospel of Christ.

2. What other examples of progress would you recognise as “signs of God's kingdom coming”?

3. What other challenges and obstacles to Christ's reign do you see?

How can we play our part, and make a difference?

1. We can do the good works God has prepared and equipped us to do (2:10)

Can you see the good works God has put in front of you, to do now?

2. We can share the good news of Christ - that God is for us and speaks peace to all peoples and cultures, through the Cross (2:17). God is willing to forgive all who come to Him; and he wants to bring people of different cultures together, in one family, in Christ.

Do you feel confident in sharing God's love with people of all beliefs and cultures, by pointing them to Jesus? Do you find yourself working as a peace-maker and reconciler in different situations?

3. We can participate in the life of a local Church family (4.16), playing our part, according to our gifts.

Do you feel able to fully play your part at StGs?
Is anything holding you back?

4. We can learn the ways of Jesus Christ, and be transformed as people, learning how to be loving in all our relationships. It takes a lifetime, but we can keep growing.

In what areas are you growing, or feeling challenged to grow right now?

5. We can Pray - for the StGs family in Leeds, and the whole Church, to be active in pursuing God's purposes; and for God to overcome evil in the world, making Christ known to all and increasingly establishing his kingdom of justice and peace, until that day when Christ returns as king, "*when the times reach their fulfilment*, to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ". Come, Lord Jesus! (and for practical help in organising your Prayer life Jon Swales is recommending the App, "Prayermate").