

"Living the Life: Purpose"  
Luke 4:16-21

We are continuing our focus on living the life God calls us to live and today we explore our purpose in life. Each of us is born with unique gifts, qualities, and potential for life. We have a purpose for being here in this world. But it is not always easy to discern what our purpose is. Even when we know what our purpose is, it is hard to keep our focus on that in present moment. In our Lenten book *40 Days 40 Prayers 40 Words*, Bruce Reyes-Chow says this about purpose, "I know that it will never happen. But if a verified letter from God arrived on my doorstep containing precise instructions for my life, I would not complain. Heck, I would even take a retired messenger pigeon landing on my head with a note that read, 'Bruce: You are heading in the right direction! -Love, G.'" Most of us could really identify with this sentiment. I often think that it would be nice to have a big sign in the sky from God telling us our purpose like sky advertising where you have a message from McDonald's (image) or from a loved one (image). That kind of clarity would make life much easier for us where we don't have to figure things out for ourselves and stumble along the way. Yet, that is not how life works. An important part of the journey is learning to discern and to pay attention to what is important in life.

Let's take a look at how Jesus stated his purpose in life. In today's Bible reading from Luke 4 we hear Jesus proclaiming his purpose and mission using the words of the prophet Isaiah (read Luke 4). According to the Gospel of Luke, this was the speech which Jesus gave at the beginning of his ministry. His mission was a direct quote from the book of Isaiah with a special focus on the "year of the Lord's favor." The phrase, the year of the Lord's favor, that is found in Isaiah and quoted by Jesus as recorded in Luke is a reference to Jubilee. Jubilee was a biblical legislation to help form a community that could practice the love of God in practical ways. The covenant that God established with the people of Israel covered all aspects of life from the spiritual to the most mundane. According to Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15, during a Jubilee year, which was supposed to happen every 50 years (the cycle of seven sabbatical years), the Hebrews were called to practice four things (put on screen): 1. To forgive all debts, 2. To free all the slaves, 3. To let the land rest, i.e., lie fallow, 4. To return the birthright land to those who lost it. This was a call for a reversal of fortunes (put phrase on screen) to ensure that all people had their basic needs met. This was the legislation in the law that ensured that people lived with others in mind. It was the way to learn and practice how to join God's mission in the world and not be consumed by the needs of our egos. This was the practice to restore God's order for the world!

The curious thing in all of this is that Jesus used this statement from Isaiah not only as a vision for the future but also as a vision for his present. Jesus did not say, this is what I will fulfill in my ministry. Instead, he said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Today!!! That is the key. Jesus was not naive. He knew that the people were living far away from his vision of Jubilee. He was well aware of the miserable and corrupt social, economic and political systems of the world. He knew about their heavy burdens of taxation and occupation. He knew how hard it was for them to make ends meet. Yet, Jesus also knew of another reality at work. He could look at the present moment and see where God was at work and where people were working for justice, for peace, and for transformation. He could see with clarity the kingdoms of the world, but he could also see

the kingdom of God at work at the same time. He had the ability to see deeply into the present.

So, as we hear about Jesus' vision purpose for life, we are challenged not just to look at the future, but to also look deeply at the present moment where God is already at work and where we are called to join in. Yet, one of our challenges as human beings is that we have a hard time staying focused on the present. We either dwell on the past or worry about the future. Here is a video that I thought was really helpful in understanding why that is for our brains. (second service, explain how we have an internal editor of past events that helps us see events without the dull or uncomfortable moments that our brains leave out). So, we get nostalgic and remember only the good parts of a time instead of all the challenges of it. "Nostalgia is the past enhanced by an editing machine." Also, we get anxious about the future because of the different possibilities that lie ahead. The present moment seems full of potential of good and bad things and that is why it is hard to fully occupy it. Anxiety about what might happen ruins our ability to fully occupy the present. Also, our bodies don't always cooperate with us to fit the needs of the moment. Sometimes we are on vacation and are supposed to be full of energy to enjoy the adventure we are on, but our bodies might be tired because we didn't get a good night's sleep in the new bed we had the night before.

Show "Why is it hard to live in the present" video  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSE6ZlaEFHM>

That is why it is hard for us to join in with Jesus in the present moment where God is showing us how to live, love, and serve. We are preoccupied with the past and the future. It is easy to miss the kingdom of God that is already unfolding in our midst right here and right now because we are not fully present to God in the now. Another related clip comes from the movie Kung Fu Panda where the panda is being reminded of the importance of the present moment:

Master Oogway's Awesome saying  
[https://youtu.be/Nq8loZlpa\\_8](https://youtu.be/Nq8loZlpa_8)

So how do we join Jesus in the present moment? In the New Testament, there are two concepts of time presented by two Greek words: Chronos and Kairos (screen). Chronos is the time we are most familiar with. It is the time of the clocks, schedules, calendars, tasks, and events. Kairos is a much larger concept of time. It is about an opportune time where the Holy Spirit is in action. In the passage for today, Jesus is speaking about that kind of time, Kairos time. Kairos time is the appointed time in the purpose of God. Kairos time is the time when God acts. Kairos time is pregnant possibility. A moment, a season. A time to create meaning. Kairos time is not linear nor dependent upon a specific day or hour. The challenge for us is to live in both times, to be aware of the calendars and clocks of this world and yet be aware of the eternal realities of our lives. Our purpose does not come from accomplishing tasks in a set amount of time, even a lifetime. Our purpose comes from living out God's purposes in our lives and that takes focus on the present moment in a Kairos kind of way. We need to develop a Kairos kind of sense of time so while we are doing the ordinary things of life, we never lose sight of the eternal and of God's presence

in the moment. When we are eating, driving, working, going to school, or being with others, we are aware of the eternal purposes of life which Jesus proclaimed (screen):

To bring good news to the poor.

To proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,

To let the oppressed go free,

To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

It is a double kind of awareness of life and living. If you are looking to live the life God calls you to live with purpose and with deep joy, the key is to be aware of God's presence and purposes in the present moment. Richard Rohr shares, "The way, you are, is the way you will be. How you do life today is how you will do life tomorrow. If you are unhappy today, you will be unhappy tomorrow." There is great truth to this because unless we learn to become aware of Chronos and Kairos, we will never find fulfillment in our lives. That is why our prayer time, our worship, our reading of the Bible, our sacred conversations with others, and our times of service in mission are so essential to our lives. They remind us that we are citizens of this world and also of the eternal kingdom of God. Our Lenten challenge for this week from Heidi Haverkamp is to take one day this week to fast from entertainment and news. Try not to look up information you need online. Use the time and energy to pray for people and places in your life that need God's love and healing. I pray that this practice will help you look deeply into the present moments of your life to see where God is dwelling and leading you to a greater life of love. Amen.