

“CHOOSING A LIFE THAT MATTERS – SERVE GOD, NOT SELF”

Isaiah 6:1-8, Ephesians 2:4-10, Matthew 28:16-20

October 20 & 21, 2018

Let me begin today with reading the call of Isaiah to be a prophet of God to the people of the world. It's found in Isaiah 6:1-8. (**READ Isaiah 6:1-8**).

Isaiah lived in a time when the people were turning away from faithfulness in God to do their own thing, to worship who or what they wanted, and to live their life any old way that they wanted to. It reflects well what we are seeing in our world today. It was during that reign of self-centeredness that God called out to Isaiah for him to become a voice in his culture to direct the people away from themselves to begin serving God with their whole hearts.

We heard how amazed Isaiah was when he experienced the presence of the Lord. He says, *“There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty”* (Is. 6:5).

We, too live among a people whose words and lives are sinful. We, ourselves, live sinful lives and our words are sinful. How can we ever hope to be used by God? How can we even think about serving a perfect and holy God?

Isaiah tells us plainly, we can't do it on our own. **BUT GOD HAS ALREADY DONE IT FOR US** – provided a way for us to become pure and holy in His presence in order to serve Him in all that we do. In Isaiah's case, an angel brought a live coal from the altar of God and touched his lips to purify him of his sinfulness. In our case, Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the price for our sinfulness, so that as we claim Him as our Savior, we find forgiveness of our sins and we are commissioned into the whole world as God's ambassadors for Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:20). God has already provided us a means to become His servants. It demands we humble ourselves before Him and serve Him only.

Yet we live in a self-serve, self-centered society that tells us over and over again that we

have to have it **our way!** We talked last week about the struggle we all have with providing comforts for ourselves even to the point that we worship comfort more than we worship God. Convenience is the law of the land, and it is killing us, literally! When we seek our own self and serve us rather than God, we suffer the consequences in a huge way.

Take for example, Michelle Akers. “By college, Michelle [Akers] had become an All-American soccer star, earning ESPN's woman athlete of the year in 1985—the same year the United States formed its first women's national team, with Michelle a starter.

“In 1991 the U.S. team won the first-ever Women's World Cup and Michelle scored 10 goals in five games, including the championship's winner. She signed an endorsement deal and became the first woman soccer player to have a paid sponsor. She played professionally in Sweden. Michelle's drive and tenacity were beginning to pay off. She even tried out as the place kicker for the Dallas Cowboys: her longest attempt reached 52 yards.

“But just as her star was rising, Michelle's health was declining. By 1993, the woman who used grit and determination to make life happen found her life unmanageable.

“Each day I felt like I had flown to Europe with no food or sleep, then flown right back and trained for hours,’ Michelle says. “She suffered from Chronic Fatigue and Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS), a debilitating disease affecting more than a million adult Americans. ‘When it was really bad, I couldn't sit up in a chair. The racking migraines stranded me at home, unable even to get up to brush my teeth or eat.’

“For the first time, Michelle could no longer count on her old friends—strength and hard work. She had to find a new way to cope.

“I couldn't bear not to be the best in the world, not to be the one who could bounce back from any injury,’ she says. ‘It was the only me I knew.’ When her marriage of four years broke up in 1994, Michelle had reached the end of herself.

“I was so sick I couldn't take a five-minute walk without needing two days on the couch

to recover. I was forced to spend a lot of time thinking about who I was. I didn't like what I saw.'

"Michelle had put her trust in Christ as a high-school student, but ignored God in college and after graduation. Now sick and alone, Michelle reluctantly accepted an invitation from a strength coach to attend his church, Northland Community Church in Longwood, Florida. Although she couldn't articulate it at the time, in retrospect Michelle says she knew she 'needed to get things right with God.'

"Looking back,' she explains, 'I think God was gently, patiently tapping me on the shoulder and calling my name for years. But I continuously brushed Him off, saying, "Hey, I know what I am doing. I can make these decisions. Leave me alone.'" Then I think He finally said, "Okay," crossed His arms and looked at me sadly—because He knew I was going to make a lot of mistakes by ignoring Him. He knew I would be hurting in the future.'

"It took total devastation before I would acquiesce and say, 'Okay, God. You can have my life. Please, help me.'"¹ Doing life our own way leads us only to hardship and disappointment. When we bow to the lures of lesser loyalties in the midst of our lives, our very souls are led away from serving the Lord.

But God has a purpose for us. In Matthew 28:16-20 we hear Jesus' call to each one of us to live as His ambassadors and become servants of the Lord God Almighty. (**READ Matthew 28:16-20**)

Jesus has come to "*seek and to save that which is lost*" (Luke 19:10), and He has called us into His service to accomplish that mission, the Great Commission. All who profess the name of Jesus Christ as their Savior are not called to sit along the sidelines and watch **others** do the work that God has called **them** to do, but to get involved and touch the lives of those right around them in their own sphere of influence who do not yet know Jesus as Savior and Lord. Each of us is called to a purpose of living our lives **FOR THE SAKE OF JESUS CHRIST**, and to

¹ (PreachingToday.com, *Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2002] pg. 267-268)

help those around us to know Him, too.

I love the mission statement of the Navigators, a non-denominational and interdenominational Christian organization. That mission statement is: “To Know Christ And To Make Him Known!” That’s our calling as believers of Jesus, saved by His grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God. That’s our purpose! But Satan has convinced many of us that we are unfit for being in ministry. We have fallen for the lies like “I’ve made mistakes, God can’t use me,” or “I still sin, God won’t use me,” or “I’m out of step with God,” or “I’m not usable,” or “I’m not gifted enough, eloquent enough, bold enough or educated enough.”² Listen, you don’t have to be seminary trained to tell others about the work of God in your life! You don’t have to be a pastor to teach others of the love of Jesus Christ! You don’t have to be specially trained to touch the life of another and show them the goodness of God! You just have to be willing to let God use you right where you are with the skills He has provided you to touch the lives of the people right next to you.

God has uniquely gifted you to do the work of being His servant right where you are. That’s the Apostle Paul’s words to us in Ephesians 2: 4-10. (**READ Ephesians 2:4-10**) God “...has created us for a life of good deeds, which He has already prepared for us to do” (2:10). He has already gifted us with all we need to reach out and do His work right where we are.

“It starts by surrendering your life to Him, if you haven’t already... The more you connect with God, the more confident you’ll become that you are where you need to be, doing what He has designed you to do.”³ Start by looking at where your passions are. What is you like to do? What are you “naturally” gifted to do? What seems second nature to you? Those are the things God has given for you to use for Him as you live a life that matters. Up front before people, behind the scenes, task oriented, good at teaching, an encourager, one who starts things or one

² (Dennis Rainey, *Choosing A Life That Matters*, [Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2017] pg. 116)

³ (Ibid., pg. 119)

who finishes things, a project person or a creative person, all these gifts are important and needed in the ministry of the kingdom of God. Find your identity in God and use that skill or talent to bring Him glory in all that you do. But use every opportunity to tell others about the love of Jesus Christ. “If you are going to engage in a spiritual enterprise (and battle), you must know who you are AND whose you are. You are His ‘agent,’ commissioned to be engaged in His global agenda.”⁴ Yet you must be willing to endure the struggles and hardships that will come before you and persevere so that you will be a successful worker for Jesus Christ.

George W. Cecil, under the pseudonym William A. Lawrence makes this chilling warning to each of us: “On the ‘Plains of Hesitation’ bleach the bones of countless millions, who at the very dawn of victory, sat down to rest, and while resting, died.” Friends you have been claimed by Jesus to be HIS workers in whatever field and occupation you find yourselves in. God can only use the willing hearts of His people. He will not force us, but He calls out to us and encourages us to be His servants so that the whole world might hear of the Salvation of Jesus Christ.

So be glad of being a servant of Jesus Christ. There is none like Him and it is an honor to serve Him.

Dennis Rainey lays it out very clearly in his book, *Choosing A Life That Matters*. He says it like this. “Jesus Christ didn’t come to take sides; He came to take over.

“Jesus Christ didn’t come to be a spare tire; He came to be the driver.

“Jesus Christ didn’t come to get your attention for a couple of hours a week; He came to be the center of your existence.

“Jesus Christ didn’t come for your leftovers; He came to be lavishly loved, wholeheartedly.

“Jesus Christ didn’t come just for your hands and feet; He came for your heart – all of

⁴ (D. Rainey, *Choosing A Life That Matters*, pg. 120)

you.

“Jesus Christ didn’t come only to save you from God’s future wrath; He came to be your Redeemer, Lord, and life-giver today.

“Jesus Christ didn’t come just to be your friend and confidant; He came to be obeyed, trusted, and worshiped.

“Jesus Christ didn’t come to make you comfortable; He came to make you secure and to enlist you in His exhilarating mission.

“Jesus Christ didn’t come to give you a good life; He came to give you His life.

“Jesus Christ will not come back as a Lamb; He will return as the conquering King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and Lord God Almighty!”⁵

No one else compares with Jesus. There is no greater person in the world whom we could serve with greater purpose. There is no greater purpose for us than to seek Jesus and serve Him. There is no one who loves us more than Jesus. There is no one who has given more for us than Jesus. There is no one more powerful or with more authority than Jesus. There is no greater pleasure we can have in our life than to work for and honor Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

The choice is ours, however as to whom we will serve. Will we serve the gods of this world and miss the Lord God Almighty? Or will we dedicate our lives in serving the One and True God, the Creator of the Universe, the Savior of the world, and the Giver of life and eternal life?

A.W. Tozer says it well in his statement, “God is looking for people through whom He can do the impossible; what a pity we plan to do the things we can only do by ourselves.”⁵

So over these last 7 weeks we’ve been looking at how we choose a life that matters. My hope is that during these weeks, you have been able to see that:

⁵ (Dennis Rainey, Choosing A Life That Matters, pg. 122)

“To seek God is the greatest quest we could ever venture to do.

“To fear God is the greatest respect we could ever give Him.

“To love God is the greatest affection we could ever have in our life.

“To obey God is the greatest act we could ever live by.

“To believe God is the greatest adventure over any other in this world.

“To worship God is the greatest experience we can ever be rewarded with.

“To serve God is the greatest privilege we could ever hope to receive.

“And this so that God may be glorified and exalted.”⁶ These are decisions that will change your life and transform not only you, but those around you.

Aren't you glad you belong to Jesus Christ? Won't you now start living for Him to live a life that matters? Let Jesus be first in all your life, and He will give you a life that truly matters for Him, for the glory of God, in Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

⁶ (D. Rainey, *Choosing A Life That Matters*, pg. 123)