

Purpose

Sunday, February 4, 2024, at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Mark 1:38 But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."

- Opening Remarks: A Joke about purpose

I'd like to begin my remarks by mentioning a philosophical conversation between an employee of a company and his supervisor in which the employee waxes eloquently about the nature and purpose of time. He notes, "Time is a construct of man, a means of adding value and structure to a chaotic universe, it serves no real purpose, it's endless and infinite, unfathomable and subjective." "You're still late" replied his boss. * Today I'd like to reflect on the purpose of our Lord's life and what that tells us about the purpose of our lives. While all the complaints about time may be true, it still has a purpose, and the times of our lives have purpose as well.

* <https://upjoke.com/purpose-jokes>

- Set the Stage

To set the stage, we note that after the episode with Jesus in the synagogue in Capernaum, He returned to the home of Simon Peter, and Andrew, accompanied by James and John. Peter's mother-in-law was very ill. Jesus heals her, and she feels well enough to get up and serve them. At sunset that Sabbath, a crowd formed in front of the house and Jesus healed many of various ailments and afflictions. Very early the next day, Jesus arose to pray in solitude, and was gone long enough for people to miss Him. His disciples eventually found him and noted that people wanted to meet Him, but He said, "let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." His ministry spread throughout the northern reaches of Israel. Note what He said in this verse.

- Main Point: When Jesus said "I have come" it was in perfect tense. There is no retreat.

Of the many points to consider in this text, I'd like to point out just one; when Jesus said, "for this purpose I have come forth," the verb translated "come forth" is in the perfect tense. The language of the New Testament has several different types of past tenses. There is the simple past, or aorist tense, similar to our past tense. There is the imperfect tense, which is continuous action, all of which takes place in the past. Then there is perfect tense, which refers to an event that took place in the past but the effects of which carry on through the present hour. For example, when Jesus, about to die on the cross, cried out "it is finished," the Bible uses the perfect tense. The work of Christ for our salvation was finished then and it is still finished now. In our passage for today, when Jesus said He had "come forth," it was in the perfect tense. He has come and there is no retreat. Even now when He is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, He is still present in the person of the Holy Spirit. His presence has a lot to do with His purpose. I think the same is true for us.

- Application:

The application is, I think, there is a connection between purpose and presence. That sometimes the enduring presence of Christ is felt in the caring presence of people, and that our purpose on earth can be addressed just by us being present with someone. I must confess that the word "purpose," while elsewhere in the New Testament, is actually not in this text. The translators added it to make the sentence better English. The concept, however, is there.

- If you look at the context, there are several actions verbs associated with purpose, but there is a purpose in presence, in enduring as well. Consider that wonderful promise in Isaiah 40:31, in which those who wait upon the Lord will rise up with eagle's wings. That same phrase describes how God sustained the Children of Israel for forty years in the wilderness. God is present and faithful, as is Christ, as is the Holy Spirit, Presence is part of our purpose as Christians as well.

- Here is a story about the power of presence.

(from a woman who grew up with an alcoholic father)

"All I know is when my son asks if I will watch him play with his Hot Wheels, I will jump at the opportunity. Deep down, I know it means the world to him. It boosts his confidence and lets him show off his cool stuff! The best part? He gets to feel important, even if only for a little bit. Having experienced the defeating feeling of being let down, that would be the last thing I would want for any of my kids.

When we play with our children, we show them how proud we are to call them our own. We demonstrate our amazement at how much they've learned and grown. We encourage them to reach higher! Why? Because they know, if they fall, we will be there to catch them. *

- Conclusion

This is an example of the power of presence. People can have a powerful effect on others just by being present with them. When Jesus came, He did much. He preached the Kingdom of God, He prayed and healed many, but He also established presence on the earth, coming with no retreat. Though seated at the right hand of the Father now, the Holy Spirit continues to represent Him on earth and in our lives. A real part of His purpose on earth is His presence. His presence matters and so does the presence of His followers in the lives of the suffering. Presence and purpose go together.

<https://herviewfromhome.com/my-fathers-absence-and-the-power-of-presence/>