

## **John 12:20-33**

<sup>20</sup>Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup>They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” <sup>22</sup>Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup>Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

<sup>27</sup>“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify your

name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”<sup>29</sup> The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”<sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine.<sup>31</sup> Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.<sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”<sup>33</sup> He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

“My soul is troubled”. These four words are simple yet profound. In today’s language, it might be heard as

- “I am sad”
- “I am depressed”
- “I don’t understand what is happening to me!”
- “I can’t handle this anymore.”
- “How will I make it through this?”
- “I am scared”

- “I am not good enough”
- “Nobody likes me”

Or many other similar phrases. I have talked about this before, but it is always worth talking about again: This world has an anxiety and depression epidemic. When Karen was in the classroom, 84% of the female teachers on her staff (including her) were on medication for anxiety and/or depression. She was unsure about the males.

This is nothing new, either. Back when she was in high school in the 1980's, she experienced the suicides of 9 classmates over 4 years. One was one of her best friends. Many years later, throughout her 33 years as a teacher, she has experienced 12 suicides of students or former students. Two were just last Summer - young adults with their whole lives ahead of them.

I am pretty sure we all know at least one person who has experienced sadness that goes beyond typical grief.

Everyone grieves over losses. Everyone gets nervous over certain things. But when this grief doesn't go away over time and affects day-to-day life or when nervousness becomes anxiety, often rendering people unable to live normal lives, there is a problem.

This has become such an epidemic that nowadays when you go to the doctor, there is a mental health screening that is completed.

So what are we to do? Well, we cannot control what other people do, but we can still help them. We can have a sympathetic ear. We can legitimize their feelings and not tell them it is all in their heads or ignore them. We can offer them help in the way of encouraging them to seek a professional. We can be encouraging. We can share the

words of God with them. We can pray for them. We can remind them that even Jesus had a troubled soul.

We can control what we do if or when we feel any of these feelings. It starts with acknowledging that you may need help. Help can be in the form of medication, therapy, or both. There should NEVER be a stigma for people who seek help for mental illness. If you broke your leg, you would certainly seek help. There is no difference. I worked in the mental health field for 20+ years. Some people are just dealt a really rough hand in life. Some have “perfectly normal” lives but for some reason, their body's chemical makeup changes. Either way, as a society, we need to stop judging people who have mental health problems. Depression and anxiety are real and need to be appropriately addressed.

Now, let's get back to the statement that even Jesus had a troubled soul. In today's gospel, Greeks are coming to see Jesus. They are coming because they have heard so many things about Jesus that they want to be able to experience what they heard about. This is important because most Greeks were Gentiles, so this shows that Jesus was for everyone, not just the Jews. But, because this passage takes place just after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, the Sanhedrin and high priests continue to plot Jesus' death because "it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus". But, upon hearing that some Greeks wanted to see Jesus, He states, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." This means that Jesus knows that the end of His life on Earth is coming shortly.

Jesus has always known the big-picture plan. He has always known that He would go to the cross and die for

our sins. But, now that the time is actually here for it to happen, He becomes troubled for a short time. He states, “Now my soul is troubled.” He is a human, after all. He knows the pain and agony that He will experience. He also knows that He will be separated from the people that He has grown to love so much. But, He then says, “And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.”

Jesus knows that this must occur in order to save all of us. He knows His true purpose and must face it.

So, perhaps in order to be able to get out of a bout of sadness, we all need to find our true purpose. Knowing His true purpose, Jesus was able to put aside the upcoming pain and re-focus on why He was going to face this terrible death. He didn't ask to be saved. Instead, He was reminded of His purpose.

Essentially, Jesus is expressing his submission to God's will and His acceptance of the sacrificial role he must fulfill for the redemption of humanity. Despite the distress and agony he feels, he recognizes that his suffering is part of God's plan for the salvation of mankind. This statement reflects Jesus' unwavering commitment to his mission and his willingness to endure the suffering and death that lie ahead, out of obedience to the Father and love for humanity.

If we all remember what our real purpose is, it will guide us through tough times. Of course, we still may need medication and/or therapy to help and that is OK. But, finding and living out our true purpose on this Earth should comfort us. We will face sad times, times when we are scared, and times when our souls are troubled... Just like Jesus did. And that is OK!



So what is our real purpose in life? To honor and glorify our Heavenly Father. Plain and Simple! How do we do that? By being the hands and feet of our Lord. It is helping others. It is loving our neighbors as ourselves. It is forgiving those who have wronged us - not 7 times but 7x70 times. It is trusting in God fully, knowing that He will provide what we need.

The Bible is very clear as to what our purpose in life should be.

Solomon says in the book of Ecclesiastes that life is all about honoring God with our thoughts and lives and thus keeping His commandments, for one day we will stand before Him in judgment. Part of our purpose in life is to fear God and obey Him.

King David says full satisfaction will come on the day when he awakes in the next life both beholding God's face and being like Him.

To the Prophet Asaph, a relationship with God matters above all else in life. Without that relationship, life has no real purpose.

The apostle Paul says that he wants nothing more than to know Christ and "be found in Him," to have His righteousness, and to live by faith in Him, even if it means suffering and dying.

Timothy's call to purpose came through the imparting of spiritual gifts by the laying on of hands. We read of his call in Paul's first letter to him. "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership." Just as

Timothy received a spiritual gift, we are told that all believers are given abilities and gifts. Paul tells us this, “For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.” Peter also tells us that we each have a spiritual gift. “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Your purpose, your calling, is given to each in accordance with the gift you have received from God. Finding your purpose by discovering your spiritual gift is the way you are to minister to the body of Christ, his church.

As stated in an article I read, “The purpose of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We glorify God by fearing and obeying Him, keeping our eyes on our future home in heaven, and knowing Him intimately. We enjoy God by following His purpose for our lives, which enables

us to experience true and lasting joy—the abundant life that He desires for us.”

So, find your real purpose in life if you haven't already. And remember that no matter what your age is, no matter what your position in life is, no matter how much money you have or don't have, no matter how high or low your IQ is, you ALL have a purpose in life.

My guess is because you are here, sitting in these pews, you have found your purpose. Yet, that doesn't mean that your soul will never be troubled, just as Jesus' was, even though He knew His true purpose. What could truly make the difference in someone else's life who may not be sitting here today, is to help them find their own purpose. Perhaps if everyone knew their true purpose in life as described above, there wouldn't be so many troubled souls

out there who are unable to heal. Help someone else find their purpose. Let us Pray:

Heavenly Father, Sometimes our souls are troubled. When that happens, reminds us of our true purpose in life. Help us to see the good that is all around us. Help us to remember and feel your unending grace and love for us. Most importantly, help us to help others who do not have this comfort in their lives. Give us the words to say to others whose souls are troubled. Help us to love, accept and acknowledge that mental illness is real but that it can be managed. Giving someone a purpose is but one way we can help. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.