A Reason to be Here

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Date: 03 November 2019

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[0:00] um it's lovely to hear um scripture read from maybe a different aspect from that which we're used to hearing and if you'd like to broaden that at all as a quick advert um if you'd like to get more into bible reading notes gay is here this morning gay give us a wave have a word with gay gay would love to direct you towards daily bible reading notes and i know she's faithfully done that for years and i think sometimes just to read scripture from a different version sometimes really helps and it helped me this morning because in this thing of wisdom that we're looking at and in this theme the question is this morning why are we here it's a really interesting question i asked myself that this morning because um i went to a concert last night in exeter and it was a great concert if it's feeder if you've ever heard of them and it was absolutely brilliant driving home by about half past 11 12 o'clock into bed getting to bed at two o'clock why am i here and uh i think this is what paul is asking us to grapple with this morning what is the reason why are we here why are we here this morning why are we here today are we here to worship are we here to give thanks are we here to seek the presence of god are we looking for answers are we looking for ways in which we can serve him more and more what is the reason we are here i love it when you ask a young person what they want to do in life it's really interesting you've got to ask them before they get to that stage where they just grunt back at you but that age where they've got this enormity of i can do anything amazing i asked that it's very patronizing to say to a young person what do you want to do when you grow up really because many of us aren't really sure that we have grown up yet but when you ask a 10 year old and i i asked some of the the kids in school saying what would be your dream job one said an astronaut i thought it's great another one said an astrophysicist i couldn't even write that another one said they wanted to be a world famous musician that's not a great thing and another said i would love to win an olympic medal you know when we were young we had this time for optimism didn't we you know every day was new the future looked like an endless canvas to be painted on we could do whatever we wanted to do if we don't accomplish something today there's always tomorrow or this next week or this next year and here we've got paul and maybe you're with me on this one but as i grow older and not necessarily wiser i find those future prospects compress themselves quite greatly into fewer and fewer years what if we don't get to fulfill that time that we want to do things in well i don't have time to do these things because we want i don't know maybe we've got other things planned but i sense for me that time is shrinking and i guess paul was thinking about that he was in prison he was seeing his options maybe in an earthly way closing but then we have this great scripture that encourages us and enlivens us today there's a few there's a film from a few years back i

don't know whether you saw it's um it's called the bucket list and it was jack nicholson and it was morgan freeman now i'm going to be i don't know whether you've seen morgan freeman he's played god in several things i'm going to be really upset when i get to heaven and it's not morgan freeman no no that's a joke um but there is morgan freeman and jack nicholson jack nicholson is a wealthy guy very very wealthy morgan freeman is has a very simplistic life he is a car mechanic with family making his way through life they find themselves thrown together in um a wing of a hospital where they are both facing a terminal illness that is their defining thing that have brought them together so they start to talk about life and life in general and so they decide that they're going to fulfill all the things that they wanted to do in life and they called it the bucket list before you kick the bucket they travel to various different places morgan freeman is a man of faith jack nicholson has lived through his money through his wealth and still feels as though for him life is totally unfulfilled you see paul is sure that there is more paul knows that whether wherever he is and happens to be that is his purpose that's where he is and that is where he is meant to be and i find that a huge encouragement because i don't want to grieve the things i haven't done i just want to live by faith

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and the two starkness of the characters as you watch this film is one who is really really hung up on what he's missing and morgan freeman is a man who is certainly at peace with where he is and i think that comes through in our scripture with paul as he gives us this morning every time you cross my mind i break out in exclamations of thanks to god each exclamation is a trigger in prayer i find myself praying for you with a glad heart i this is a guy who's in prison i am so pleased that you have continued this with me believing and proclaiming god's message from the day you heard it right up to the present date there has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that god has started this great work in you and would keep it going and flourishing on the very day that jesus christ appears what a great man of faith and i long for that as well and i think there's a certain piece of finding where we are and where we are supposed to be rather than looking ahead i always remember we were at women's day you've had the advert for the women's day it was many years ago i was at the back there hurrying around with all the guys making coffee um i'm one of these people who want think that the grass is always greener i'm always looking to the next thing it's not good it's not good better to live for today and there was a particular thing at the time there was a job advert that somebody had sent me and i've been hugely tempted by this i'm busying myself around and the leader who was up here the lady was leading in prayer i can't remember her name at the time and she just stopped where she was and she said i sense i have a word for somebody here you need to hear this and that you're looking over the fence and you think the grass is greener she said i just want
to tell you that it's astroturf i think for the guys um who knew me at the time i was a bit of a mess on the floor at the back at the time i had never expected to come to a women's day and find myself being prayed for at the back it was just an amazing moment i think this scripture speaks to me so clearly because there is a reason for paul being where he is and i guess that wasn't clear to him but he had a sense of peace in knowing that he was in the place that he was supposed to be however difficult that was and this is a man who refuses to be diminished by his situation or age i think that's really important this is a man a person who refuses to be diminished by his situation or his age there's none of this well i've done that i've done my bit and now i can sit back and relax no there is a purpose for him in every season and i think that comes through strongly in our scripture this morning he says alive i'm christ's messenger dead i'm his bounty life versus even more life i can't lose isn't that a great place to be where we don't lose there is no loss whatever we do i was sent a great book about two years ago and it was helen pett she may have recommended it to you as well this is my third time of reading and as i read this again while i've been away for the week i was really uh thinking obviously we we didn't quite do the brexit thing did we on the 31st and um and i was thinking about donald trump with fake news and i came to the chapter where it talked about fake religion fake stuff if you ask a thousand people who don't want anything to do with religion why that is they'll tell you all the reasons why they don't like it but i doubt they'd be describing the real thing paul is like an older brother timothy and in this letter as he writes to him he says paul called this kind of religious devotion that people have in many ways a form of godlessness because it's the exact opposite to what it's pretending to be he was telling timothy to watch out for people who fake it with their faith in other words some religion looks like it's wrapped in the right package but it's not and what he was talking about is he says it's like identity theft it seems like a lot of people who say they know jesus have all the right words and all the right moves but what they don't have is sincerity and authenticity did you get that in paul's writing i get it every time they talk a big game and a big bunch of 20 pound words to describe an otherwise simple idea about faith but in reality they really do they don't but in reality they never really do anything it's like a guy with a cowboy hat one duck one cow and a tractor and he calls himself a rancher we don't want to be all hat and no cattle when it comes to faith god doesn't like it when people fake it it's not the same as identity theft in a way only the figures are stealing god's identity and using it to make people feel bad or force them to change who they are to fit into a particular religious community that power is easy to spot what is really easy to do is to have faith
because that is shown in a form of grace and acceptance as well as sincere love and respect it's the kind of power that actually does things rather than just talks about it paul is talking about the real deal the real deal and that is why we're here i've been blessed with a car with um this that's got digital radio and so i can now listen to premier christian radio in ucb and i was challenged the other morning at driving along and uh there was a story that an american pastor was telling that they'd prayed for a guy in their church called dave dave was senior in years he'd been in hospital they'd been praying from this week and they'd expected him to pass to go home to be with the lord the

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church had gathered they'd prayed earnestly for dave unexpectedly on the tuesday there was a guy and i think his name was steve and steve was a young guy he had a young family he was a dentist and accidentally in his work he'd been bitten by one of his patients he'd been infected the infection had gone to his brain and he was in intensive care the church gathered and prayed for him amazingly dave had this miraculous healing this older guy this senior guy in their church steve went home to be with the lord a young man with a young family the eldest of the church came to him and said what do we do this week what do we do on a sunday how can we celebrate dave when pete this sort of steve has gone home to be with the lord and he said dave got healed but steve got better they've got healed but steve got better because he's now with the lord and we're all going to be with the lord i'm going to miss you a lot if i go before you but i'm going to see you i'm going to see you you know i think what paul is saying is death has no fear for me because i've got a job to do and i know what my purpose is whenever that time comes but i've got a job to do i pray this morning that as we think about this thing about wisdom is they gave thanks as paul gives thanks for his situation paul knows his reason for being here at this time and the question is do we do we live for christ or do we go around with all these things that we wanted to do and feeling resentful because we didn't get to do them or haven't and i think i'm speaking to myself especially at the moment paul knows his reason for being here as long as i'm alive in this body there is good work for me to do if i had to choose right now i hardly know which i choose the desire to break camp and to be with christ is powerful for me some days i can't think of anything better but most days because of what you are going through i am sure that it's better for me to stick it out here so i plan to be around a while our faith says live for christ and in christ and to seek his purpose so what is our reason for being here today tomorrow and this week to fulfill some dreary bucket list
to feed our longing for something that we feel we missed or will we use it to tell the amazing work of god or will we use it to tell of his wonders like the guy looking out the window of the plane will we use it to encourage others in the faith will we use it to tell it as it is and not some form of dreamed up fake religiosity will we use it to deepen our discipleship in whatever age we might be in there is no better way than to go deeper with christ will we use it to engage in the purposes of our church in reaching our community will we use it to speak out for justice if ever there is a time for the church to stand and speak out for justice to encourage our next generation of christian witness not only in this place but in our community to consider our legacy to give and share what will people say of us when we are with the lord whatever that is paul encourages us this morning let's not avoid the question paul was forced to ask himself what is my reason for being here let's ask god the same question and ask the spirit of god to show us encourage us and empower us afresh as maybe we go home and read that scripture again today and tomorrow and during this week i pray that you together with me are as encouraged and challenged with this scripture as the day i read it praise god bless you because Generally who Gosh is i the you are no

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