

What are we here for?

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[0:00] Jesus Christ Sometimes when you're driving, you come to a fork in the road, and you scratch your head and you say, ! Where to from here? Where to from here? Which way shall I go?

You get those sort of moments through life sometimes, and God gets your attention, and He stops you in your tracks. and you take stock of where are you going. I think in some ways we're at a fork in the road, a stopping point on the way, a decision point, a time that we can pose ourselves that same question, why are we here and what next?

Where to from here? What lies ahead? And it's our annual church meeting today, a time when we do consider where we've come from and where we're going, we reflect on the journey we've come through and the journey that lies ahead.

The road ahead. And so I've picked for a theme along this line as to what is the church here for?

What is the church here for? In a way it's the same question for each one of us individually.

Why am I here? Each one of us, as well as corporately as a group, why are we here? Each one of us and as a group, what is the church here for?

[1:24] And Paul got to that point when he was headed down in his intent down the Damascus road, heading to the city of Damascus, and his intent was to destroy the church of Damascus.

And God stopped him in his tracks. God got his attention. Acts 9 we read, And Saul, Yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and he desired in him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, the Christian way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is half of thee to kick against the prince, as in the gods, as it were.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

[2:41] Then Paul was headed to Damascus with the intent, as he was breathing out, threatening and slaughter to kill God's people at Damascus. But ultimately Paul was saved and given an incredible mission.

And when he got to Damascus, he preached Christ. He preached salvation. And it can happen to all of us through life, as we come to the crossroads, as it were, in our faith, and we look ahead and we ask, why am I here?

And what does God want of me? I believe we ought to have great expectations. Great expectations. Because we have a great God.

Amen? We ought to have great expectations. Let us ask ourselves individually, corporately, what are we here for? What does God want of us?

What does God expect of us? What is our mission? And what is our vision? What do we see?

[3:47] It must be a scriptural mission, a scriptural vision. And if we can grab that vision, that mission, let us then make preparations to fulfil it.

And the critical question, the critical question for everyone here, is what are we here for? And I put it to you, some things to reflect on this biblical vision.

Some of the glimpses of what God shows to his servants through the pages of scripture that we can take heart in and hopefully find some application for ourselves.

And the vision it speaks to us, what is it that we see in spiritual terms? These are really just some scattered thoughts along this line, around this kind of theme as to what the scriptures tell us, as to what God wants of us.

What God wants of us. And it's still true today, as it was back then. There's many other things we could use. These are just some little glimpses, some little signposts, if you like, along that journey, along that road ahead.

[4:52] Some signposts that God posts along the way. Some things that stand out to me, others might stand out to you. But as we reach that stopping point, as we reach that fork in the road, as we reach that place that we just stop and think, and God stops us in our tracks, I'd like to propose to consider today some signposts along that journey ahead, along the way.

And firstly, in Daniel 11, verse 32, the latter part. Daniel 11, verse 32, it says, What are we here for? We're here to know God, to be strong, and to do exploits. I believe every believer is called to be a participator in the body of Christ, to be an active, functioning part.

How can we be strong? We need to rely on God, because humanly speaking, we are weak and inadequate, and really that's the best place to be, isn't it?

When we're feeling weak, when we're feeling totally, woefully inadequate, that's the place that God can take us and use us for His glory. It can happen as God has more of us, as we come to the end of our own resources.

[6:31] The source of our strength must be God and His power. We can tap into His absolute and awesome and undiminished resources, the reserves of God's resources.

These are they that we can draw upon. The power of His Holy Spirit, the power of God, He can empower us when we're feeling inadequate and weak. And when someone is empowered, they have authority.

You know, you put a police uniform on the average Joe, and he's empowered. She's empowered. There's a power that comes as they are clothed with that police uniform.

You know, nothing changes on the physical level, but something changes in the authority level. And that's what can happen for you and me as the power of the Holy Spirit encloaves us, encloaves us. We're consumed by His power. God can empower us and equip us for His work in us and through us to do His will and to do His work. Philippians 2.13, it says, For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

[7:41] We are here for God to work in us, through us, to will and to do of His good pleasure. If only, if only God will get a hold of us, get a hold of us and shake us from our stagnancy and shake us and move us and make us what He wants us to be.

You know, I've been encouraged lately. There's been some people come up to me and they're saying, God is working on their hearts and they're seeing that some changes need to happen and God has moved them forward.

It's God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. In Psalm 40, verse 8, David says, I delight to do thy will, O God.

O my God. Yea, thy law is within. My heart. As we fear and nourish our souls, as we let the Word dwell in us richly, we'll delight to do His will.

Delight to do His will. My hope for you, for us, is that we will be that people who will know God and be strong and do exploits for His glory.

[8:55] That will grasp hold of what God wants each one of us to do and that will each one of us realise that capacity that is in us that everyone will actively minister to their full potential.

That it will be a church full of ministers, a church full of ministers who minister for God. That is my vision, my hope, my prayer. What are we here for?

To know God, to be strong and to do exploits. What are we here for? We are here to follow hard after God. To follow hard after God.

In Psalm 63 verses 7 through 8, Because there has been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee.

Thy right hand upholdeth me. My soul followeth hard after thee. That's the will of God for you.
[9:59] For us, that your soul would follow hard after God. That is the soul deep desire, that intensity, that resolution, that your soul will not hold back.

Don't hold back. Brother, sister, don't hold back what God is putting on your heart to do. How do we serve God?

With might and strength, with intensity and passion, or is it half-heartedly? Half-heartedly and weakly.

In 2 Kings 13, we see an account 2 Kings 13, King Joash was with the prophet Elisha, and the enemies of Judah were surrounding Jerusalem at this time and King Joash went to Elisha for counsel and Elisha said to the king, open the window and take your bow and this arrow and shoot it out the window.

So he did what he was told. The prophet said open the window, he opened the window, he grabbed his bow and his arrow and he shot it out of the window. Joash obeyed and Elisha identified that this was a picture that the Lord would bring deliverance to God's people, a deliverance over Syria.

[11:27] And then Elisha instructed Joash to take the remaining arrows in his hand. You can picture that he had these arrows in his hand. And he was told to strike them against the floor.

So Joash did that, he bent down and he took those arrows and he went, three times with those arrows on the floor.

Joash obeyed but apparently was reluctantly. Maybe he thought, what? Knock some arrows on the ground, what's the point of all that? And so he kind of did it half-heartedly.

Sort of just going through the motions, knocking the arrows on the ground. And Elisha said, because he only struck the arrows half-heartedly, half-heartedly, his victory over the enemy would be incomplete.

Yes. That's right. And brothers and sisters, what about you? What about us? Do we do the work of the Lord half-heartedly? you? Do you do the work of the Lord half-heartedly?

[12:34] Instead of smashing them on the ground with a bit of energy, with a bit of resolution, with a bit of passion? What about you? Brother, sister, what about you?

Do you do the work of the Lord half-heartedly? Your prayerfulness, your devotion? Or do you do it with fervency?

And effectiveness? What are we here for? We're here to follow hard after God. What are we here for? We're here to press forward, to press towards the mark, to press towards the mark, to go God's way, not to coast along, but to search forward, not to settle down and settle back, but instead to press on, onward and upward.

It's our responsibility to take the way forward. In Philippians 3.14, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

There's an intensity there as you stretch towards the finishing line. We know our Lord is coming soon, time is short, earthly, time is limited, and the finishing tape is getting closer.

[13:50] Friends, we need to press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling. Proverbs 4.18, it says, but the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

It may be a road uphill, that race that is chosen for you, that gospel racetrack that you're racing down, it may be uphill for you. It may be an obstacle course of sorts, it might be jumping over a few things and around a few things, but keep up the pace.

It may be uphill, but it will be brighter, there's a brighter day, and this race still lies ahead for you.

Brother, the race still lies ahead. Don't let up your strength, don't let up your resolve.

Run with patience, with perseverance, go for the long haul. I trust that we're here for the long haul. Now, as a church, I believe we've been blessed for our perseverance.

It's not been some fly-by-night operation. It's been a perseverance through many obstacles. The race has been long and it continues to be hard, but we must continue to press on, press on, press on towards the mark.

[15:02] What are we here for? We're here to be sensitive to God's will and God's leading. In Acts 16, there was occasions where God prompted in

certain ways and we need likewise to be responsive to God's promptings. In Acts 16, it says that they were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. We can preach the word in Asia today. Amen?

Asia needs the word of God today, but at that time, it wasn't the right time to preach the word in Asia. And then another time they sought to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not.

The Holy Spirit did not allow them to go there. But then they saw a man from Macedonia in a vision saying come over and help us and they understood assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them.

We need to be led by God's Spirit. Be sensitive to God's will and God's leading. Sometimes what seems right is wrong. We need to know. We need to be led by God's Spirit.

[16:07] We need to have that sensitivity. Pray for us. Pray for me that we'll be led by God's Spirit in the decisions we made. Sometimes we seek God over something and the answer is no.

We need to respond to that too. What are we here for? We're here for souls. Souls for harvest. The Lord has given us a task to fulfil. Our mission should be his mission.

Luke 19 10 it says, for the son of man has come to save and to save that which was lost. We're here to be messengers of the gospel.

That's what we're here for. And it means working with people. People of all shapes and sizes and backgrounds. People with rough edges and different ways from us.

And we need to exercise grace with one another. Grace with one another. I was in a large hardware shop in this area which will be unnamed.

[17:06] And the shop assistant was serving another customer ahead of me in the queue. And this customer's looking a little bit dishevelled. And when he got to me he said something like, I hate it when people stink.

Afterwards I mentioned it to the manager. Because it doesn't matter where the people stink. Christ. It doesn't matter really does it? And we are to serve them with due thoughtfulness.

And it's the same in the church. Every soul matters. Every soul matters. No matter what. Now some souls could use a bit more deodorant.

But every soul is precious. Amen. Every soul is precious to God. And it shouldn't matter. Now Christians are meant to smell. You know?

Some Christians are meant to smell. We're meant to be a sweet smelling savour. A sweet fragrance unto our God. God. Like the smell of incense in the worship of God.

[18:17] But people today, God counts souls. God counts souls. When in Acts 27, Paul was in the ship and it was about to be broke up and they were prisoners and it looked like their lives were under threat and they were about to be killed by the soldiers in case they escaped and such things.

But Paul said God had said to him that all would be saved. Everyone would be saved. All souls would be saved.

276. God counted each one. God counts souls. Souls. Souls. Young, old, short, tall, wide, of every country, every tribe, every kindred, every tongue, every nation.

And our great hope is to see souls saved by the transforming grace of God. That's what we want to see. That's what we hear for.

We hear for souls. In Matthew 9, 37, the Lord Jesus said, the harvest truly is great. It's plenteous, but the labourers are few.

[19:29] Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. Harvest is spelt W-O-R-K.

Harvest means work. And for us to harvest we need some harvesters. We need workers. And I was just talking to Stuart and Jackie who are labouring faithfully with a number of other faithful people this morning who are working with the young people in this church right now.

And they're saying the problem isn't so much the space they can kind of get a bit squashed in there that's not the problem they said the problem is workers.

The problem is workers. We need willing workers. Willing workers. And this is our plea our prayer as our Lord said pray the Lord of the harvest and he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

We're here because there is a work to do. What are we here for? We're here for conquest. For conquest. It's been said pick your fights. But most importantly of all fight the good fight of the fame. [20:53] And friends we ought not to be surprised at the attacks we are under. Julie and I are under another barrage of attacks of life. Someone harassing us.

Don't be surprised at the attacks. It's par for the course. We should expect this. And in fact rejoice. Rejoice because of it.

There is a spiritual conflict being waged for the souls of men and women. And we you and me are called to fight. To fight. To fight on relentless irregardless to press the fight ever harder. And the mission must go forward no matter what. No matter what the heartache no matter what the opposition no matter what the discouragement and the attacks. It ought only to steal our resolve even stronger.

Why? We are called to the work of demolition. Demolition. We're called to break down gates. The church of God is designed to be a gate breaking body.

[22:11] To break down, to storm the gates of hell. And we're opening up a new battle front. That's Smithfield Plains. We're opening up a new battle front. And maybe more.

Maybe there's a few more battle fronts we could open around this city. We're opening up a new battle front. And it's not for the faint hearted. There is a witch's covenant in close proximity and we will see what the Lord does in this venture of faith for his glory and by his power.

Matthew 16 18 Jesus says to Peter and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And so brothers and sisters we must go forward in faith being led by God's spirit.

He might move us here and there and all over the place we'll be led and we'll follow the cloud. We must mobilise and unleash the church of God. What are we here for?

We had a bloom where we planted. We had a stand in the gap. In Ezekiel 22 13 God says to Ezekiel I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land that I should not destroy it but I found none.

[23:35] I sought for a man among them to make up the hedge now there's a thorny hedge but there was a gap there it was vulnerable he sought for a man to stand in the gap to make up the hedge but I found none he says friends there's a huge vacuum a vacuum gaps in the hedge Abraham stood in the gap he interceded for Lot in Genesis 18 he prayed for Lot in that time of Sodom Moses in Exodus 32 he stood in the gap came down from the mountain the people were there carrying on like foolish things and Moses stood in the gap he prayed brothers sisters we need to stand in the gap it speaks of prayer it speaks of service it speaks of a responsibility there's many gaps of faithfulness there's many gaps

I'll see back to our church history there's people that have come and gone there's people that have served and they've left some gaps we've not had a piano player for months many many months that's a shame it's a gap we've not had a youth leader a definite youth leader for many many months since someone left there's a gap there I want to urge you today if you could just consider this be a gap filler be a gap filler brother sister if you can fill the gap stand in the gap amen I urge you this morning be a gap filler find that place of service that place of prayer that place of faithfulness be a gap filler we need more gap fillers in this church you know when we had a change in the

Sunday school leadership I think of Stuart and Jackie they saw a need and they filled it didn't they they saw a need and they filled it when we needed the new Sunday school leadership and they have well and truly blossomed stand in the gap for the Lord stand in the gap and intercede pray here's a good little mnemonic to help you and you can buy them on bracelets and things not that I need some bracelets but it's F-R-O-G F-R-O-G people want to hear of that who's heard of that one oh you're all going to learn something this morning F-R-O-G fully rely on God you know some have got that what's it called what would Jesus do this is F-R-O-G fully rely on

God that's a good motto to have isn't it we all need to do that and you might think there's a gap there but I'm not sure I'm not sure that I'm able rely on God it's that simple it's a simple formula really isn't it and if you rely on God you'll get what God can do amen that's what you'll do and so what are we here for we're here to be consumed with the zeal of God Titus 2 says that we should of

good works not this half hearted business but zealous of good works I want to see every one of God's people realise and release into their full potential their abilities in God to be zealous of good works that we be a people who grow in grace grow in grace sometimes the rough people make they're a blessing wow some of you are really blessed

I know there's some rough people that help you to grow in grace I need them thank God I got some of them but people we need to grow in grace don't we and grow in those spiritual disciplines and make a mature Christian you can't cope with these ones what are you going to do when it really hops up you know let's grow in grace forbear be willing!

[28:13] to bear the cross go the extra mile shoulder the Lord's yoke in 2 Peter 3 but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to him be glory both now and forever we're getting to the close here lastly ultimately and absolutely what are we here for most importantly of all we're here for the glory of God we're here unto the glory of God while he gives us grace to breathe another breath and live another day and see another sunrise we're here for the glory of God for his glory let's live like it let's talk like it whether we eat or drink or any such thing whatsoever you do do all to the glory of God so just to recap why are we here why are we here and what next on this journey I pray you will journey on in

God's direction know God and be strong and do exploits delights to do his will fight hard after God press forward towards the mark be sensitive to God's will his leading and we hear for souls for harvest for conquest to fight the good fight of the faith to stand in the gap remember this are you going to be a gap filler are you going to be a gap filler be jealous of good works realize your abilities in God and above all do all to the glory of God so here's glory so let's consider now spiritually you're at the fork in the roads it's a stopping point on the journey let's regather our strength and resummon our energies it's a stopping point on the journey but we're not to stop and stay stagnant we're to get up and get going

Lord what wilt thou have me to do what wilt thou have me to do I love what Moses said after a time of great testing and sin and failure in Exodus 32 verse 29 Exodus 32 verse 29 there been great disaster and backsliding and the people of God acted shamefully and Moses says consecrate yourselves today to the Lord consecrate yourselves today to the Lord that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day consecrate yourselves this day to the Lord that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day brothers and sisters let's do that let's do that let's consecrate ourselves unto the Lord God