

The Fulfilment Of The Purpose Of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 December 1989

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] That passage, which was read for the epistle tonight, is one of the sort of high points in the New Testament when the writer to the epistle says this, In many and various ways, God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by a son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

He spoke to us in this day by a son, the heir of all things, through whom he created the world. And that's sort of the anchor point. Now let me tell you a couple of things which arise from that. Long before Jesus came to reveal God to us, we already knew quite a lot about God through the exercises of the philosophers.

And this is what we knew. We knew that God is spirit, constant, holy, almighty, and eternal.

[1 : 27] Now the significance of that is that you can arrive at that knowledge of God simply by the exercise of your reason, and the philosophers have done it.

You may not personally have done it, but they have done it on your behalf. So that's what the philosophers had to say. When the philosophers came to talk about you, or a human person, they had this theoretical possibility to present.

This is the picture, the philosopher's picture, of what a human being is potentially capable of being. person completely self-determining, completely good, and wholly realizing absolute values, completely unified, inwardly and outwardly.

Such a person, if he exists, would supply an explanation of the universe as a whole. So the theoretical possibility about you is that you are capable of supplying an explanation of the universe as a whole, if you are complete, self-determining, completely good, wholly realizing absolute values, etc., etc.

Now, we live in the world of the human potential movement. And the human potential movement is no doubt aimed at producing such a person.

[3 : 06] And you may quietly aspire to be that person. Who knows? But God bless you. No, no, that wouldn't be appropriate to say. The thing that happens then, you see, is that that's as far as the philosophers could get in knowing who God is and knowing what a human being is capable of being.

And then along come the Hebrew prophets. And they knew God not as an idea for philosophers, but as a person.

And they were able to say that God is spirit, constant, holy, almighty and eternal, a being of majesty unapproachable, awful, alike in his holiness and his greatness, to fear whom is the beginning of wisdom.

And so the Hebrew prophets had us prostrate ourselves before God as a person. And then along came Jesus. And Jesus taught us about this God, awful in his holiness and his greatness.

And he said, this God, whom you know as king and judge, who demands of you absolute moral conduct, this God, I want to introduce you to as your father, your heavenly father.

[4 : 51] That you would turn to him and from the bottom of your heart say, Abba, father. Well, that was fairly shocking.

Then he said one other thing about this God. He said he is a God of unlimited and indiscriminating love.

And that means that you are the object of the unlimited and indiscriminating love of God.

You might say, well, surely God has more discretion than to love me. Or surely God cannot possibly include me. No, the nature of God is that he loves indiscriminately.

And so that includes you. And his love is unlimited. And so it includes you. Well, the game was up when Jesus did that because sort of humanity threw up its hands and said, we cannot tolerate that if the God who is God of the universe does not recognize the essential worth of me as a person, then he doesn't deserve to be God.

[6 : 18] And so it became our business to relieve ourselves of the concept of God. And for the last few hundred years, we've been working on it very heavily.

And I want to give you three quick illustrations drawn as it happens from the current edition of the Atlantic Monthly, which says this about Nietzsche.

His thinking was grounded in a bitter repudiation of Christianity. And he devoted much of his life to scouring human consciousness in order to cleanse it of every Christian idea and emotion.

And we have a powerful heritage from that man. His thinking has marked our century in a way that should perhaps bring tears to our eyes.

that that was what he was determined to do. And the Atlantic Monthly says further of Freud, disorders of the soul, which for Christians derive in one way or another from sin and hence their ultimate origins are mysterious, Freud believed to be scientifically explicable.

[7 : 52] From this conviction it followed that the healing work Christians believed to be dependent on divine grace, Freud could assign altogether to human therapy.

well, you see, that is trying to relieve us of the scourge of being dependent upon a God of indiscriminating and unlimited love.

And so, robbing us of the true dignity that belongs to us as human beings in our own mind. And then the Atlantic Monthly gives Marx a going over and says of him that Marx tacitly claimed for the proletariat qualities much like those attributed in the Old Testament to God, omniscience, righteousness, and historical sovereignty, all devoted to avenging past wrongs and transfiguring human existence.

Well, you see, that has been why it's somewhat of a miracle to see you all here tonight. If they'd been totally successful, I presume we wouldn't be here.

But their argument breaks down at some point. And the, what I simply want to put before you is this, that in that passage, taken from the first verses of Paul's, of the epistle to the Hebrews, Christian makes the claim that the God who is God has spoken to us by his Son, the Son whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also has created the world.

[10 : 00] Our spiritual inheritance is the riches of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, a profound attempt to win us back from belief in and dependence upon God.

And that's where we are. Now, what I want to say about this is very simple.

I want simply to point out to you a number of people who, in the course of my life, have very much impressed me. The theoretical Superman who could explain what human destiny is all about is simply a theoretical possibility that philosophers perhaps aspire to, and which I think in the great human potential movement we consider to be a goal for our humanity.

But I am impressed that Malcolm Mugridge, who was the editor of Punch magazine, and truth is ultimately funny.

Therefore, it takes a sense of humor to understand the truth, and he must have had one, and he came to see that Jesus is the man through whom God has revealed himself to us.

[11 : 39] T.S. Eliot, in his groping to give definition to our human existence, was converted to faith in Jesus Christ.

J.B. Phillips, an Anglican clergyman, was determined that people should know Jesus, and so paraphrased the New Testament in the time of war, in order that people who were fighting one of the great sort of cosmic struggles of our planet, might fight it in some awareness of God's ultimate purpose.

And Mother Teresa, she found that the dying people understand who Jesus is. And Jean Vanier left from being a professor of philosophy to working with the mentally retarded because they understood who Jesus is.

And C.S. Lewis went from being a professor of English to the business of explaining who Jesus is to airmen and soldiers whose lives were daily at risk.

church. And Chuck Colson went from the White House to the prison house and found Jesus and spends his time explaining the nature of the kingdoms of this earth and the nature of the kingdom of God.

[13 : 32] God. And so, you see, what we have to do and what Christmas is all about, you know, as if anybody could put it in a word, and I, the fool that I am, will try, but to know what Christianity is all about, it's this, that we have to go back from asking what is the purpose of our humanity, to what is the purpose of God.

That's the ultimate question. And man cannot find his fulfillment except in relationship to the God who was revealed by the birth of Jesus Christ into our world.

so that this God who Jesus told us to acknowledge as Father, this God who loves us with an unlimited and indiscriminate love, and this love is like a fire that burns, so that Jesus says two things happen when this love engulfs you.

You either perish because of the intensity of it, or you have eternal life as the fulfillment of it.

and this purpose of God, we discover when we read those words, and listen because you will recognize them, in those days there went out from Caesar Augustus a decree that all the world should be taxed.

[15 : 43] and as that happened from the Roman emperor who thought the whole of the world was under his rule, that statement which he made, at the very moment that he made that statement, history fell into line.

and the great pronouncement of the eternal God of all ages, the infinite eternal God of holiness, this God at that moment gave his decree and that decree was that Jesus Christ, the babe of Bethlehem was to have a name higher than any human king, a name which ultimately the whole of human history will come to acknowledge that he indeed is Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

and we have the beginning of that as we celebrate the birth of Christ and the fulfillment of that in the fulfillment of the whole of history, in the fulfillment of the whole of our humanity, in the fulfillment of the purpose of the God whose unlimited and indiscriminate love applies to all of us.

Amen. God