

This Is Your Life

On Sunday we began a new sermon series in the book of Ephesians called “Living Into Your Destiny.”

1. Warm up question. The movie “The Princess Diaries” tells the story of a shy, awkward teenager with low self-esteem, who just wants to be invisible, but then is told she’s actually a princess who’s destined to rule. When you were a teenager, how did you see yourself? What was your sense of identity?
2. Ephesians chapter 1 wastes no time digging into three of life’s most basic questions.
Question 1: Who am I? With that question in mind, read Ephesians 1:1-8a.
 - a. There are lots of complicated words and phrases in this passage. Which word or phrase jumps out at you – and why?
 - b. Verse 4 says that God “chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.” What do you get from that phrase? What does it say about who you are?
 - c. Verse 5 says that God “destined us for adoption as children through Jesus Christ.” What do you get from that phrase? What does it say about who you are?
 - d. Is it healthy to think of ourselves as “chosen” and “destined?” What are the pros and cons?
 - e. As best you can, try to imagine the thought process that took place in God’s mind eons ago when you were planned and conceived and put those thoughts into words. What was God thinking when you were planned and conceived?
 - f. In what ways does the perspective of verses 1-8 challenge (or reaffirm) the self-concept you typically carry around with you?
3. Assuming we have been chosen for some great destiny, the next obvious question is,
Question 2: What is my mission? With that in mind, read Ephesians 1:8b-12.
 - a. Again, there are lots of evocative words and phrases in this passage. Which word or phrase jumps out at you – and why?
 - b. Verses 9-10 suggest that the “mystery of God’s will [and] plan for the fullness of time” is “to gather up all things in Christ.” If our job is to assist with the implementation of God’s plan, then it follows that our mission is “to gather up all things in Christ.” What does that phrase mean to you?
 - c. Think about the stories of Jesus. Can you think of a story that illustrates what it looked like when Jesus was “gathering all things together”?

- d. Think about a challenging situation you've faced this past week (or in recent weeks). Tell us what happened, then describe how you could have or should have acted if your goal was to "gather up all things in Christ" in that particular situation.
 - e. How do you feel about "gathering up all things in Christ" as a personal mission statement? What do you like or dislike about it?
4. However we articulate our person mission statement, the next natural question is, **Question 3: What resources are available for our mission?** With that question in mind, read Ephesians 1:13-23.
- a. As you read this portion of the passage, what word or phrase jumps out at you – and why?
 - b. Jeff highlighted three sources of power for our mission that are alluded to in chapter 1:
 - Cooperation of the Mystical Forces. Verse 3 says God offers us "every spiritual blessing in heavenly places." The Oxford Study Bible says this phrase refers to "the unseen spiritual world behind and above the material universe" – the idea being that unseen mystical forces (like angels) work with us when we're in the God mode in our lives. (Example: Cynthia's sign in the clouds.)
 - Inner Voice of the Holy Spirit (vs. 13) offering guidance, wisdom, courage. (Example: Jeff feels the urge to rub his Dad's shoulder.)
 - Resurrection Power (vs. 19-20). An "open mindset" that says each failure is a stepping stone to the next great thing – "You can take me down, but God will raise me up again." (Example: Louis Waterman lost a big insurance sale to a bad pen, then invented the Waterman pen.)

We learn best from each other's stories, so let's share some stories about times we've experienced one of these three powers in operation in our lives.

- c. Let's close with a quote from Father Glenn McDonald that sums up much of what we've been talking about: "Who you are – or more particularly, who you *think* you are – will influence everything you think and say and do over the next 24 hours – how you treat others, whether or not you choose to forgive yourself, and whether you believe your own life is part of a master plan or just a biological accident." Let's live with a heightened awareness of who we are and why we're here.

If you'd like to participate in the 2017 Soul Care process, you can still submit a Plan electronically or at the Welcome Desk on Sunday. Here's the link to the Soul Care Self-Assessment: <http://lifejourney.church/soulcare>. Dare to live intentionally in 2017!