

Finding Meaning

On Sunday we continued our sermon series called “Jesus, Light of the World” by exploring Jesus’ answer to the meaning of life.

1. Warm-up question: Sunday’s sermon began with a story about a philosopher who asked his driver to pretend to be him and give his lecture on the meaning of life. All went well until someone asked a complex question that stumped the driver. Have you ever had one of those “dear in the headlights” moments? What happened?
2. To understand what Jesus says about the meaning of life, it helps to understand the legal concept of “trusts.” A “trust” is created whenever anyone entrusts something of value to someone else with the stipulation that the recipient must use that thing of value for the benefit of third parties in a manner consistent with the instructions of the original donor. Let’s see if we can remember the key terms. What do we call . . .
 - a. The original donor who gives something of value?
 - b. The thing of value that is given?
 - c. The one who receives the thing of value to manage?
 - d. The third party who is supposed to benefit from all this?

(Answer key found on p. 3)

3. Jeff illustrated how a simple trust works by giving away a \$20 bill with the instruction that the recipient must use it to benefit someone else. In this example. . .
 - a. Who represents God?
 - b. Who is the Trustee?
 - c. And who is the Beneficiary?
 - d. What does the \$20 represent?

After giving this example, Jeff said, “What just happened there is, in a nutshell, Jesus’ answer to the meaning of life. Understand what just happened there and you will know everything you need to about why God put you here on earth.” What do you think he meant? What does the \$20 example teach us about the meaning of our life?

4. Let’s now read our Gospel passage – Matthew 25:14-30.
 - a. The word “talent” in Jesus’ culture meant a huge unit of money equal to about \$420,000. The point of the parable is clearly not that God gives us each a boatload of money. So what do the “talents” represent? What does God give each of us in abundance?
 - b. What are we expected to do with the “talents” God entrusts to us?

- c. What are we supposed to learn from the two wise servants in this parable?
 - d. What are we supposed to learn from the unwise servant in this parable?
5. In Matthew 20:28, Jesus said, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many,” then goes on to call us to adopt the same pattern of life. We often get stuck trying to figure out specifically what we’re supposed to do to serve God. We use phrases like “God’s will for my life” and struggle to figure out what that is. Jeff suggested we need not (and cannot) figure this out in advance. Our calling is to simply be ready to make the most of the opportunities that God, the Grantor, sends us and, in that way, little-by-little discover what we’re meant to do in life.
- a. How does that sit with you? What do you like or not like about that way of “finding God’s will?”
 - b. Jeff shared the story of a Japanese man named Sugihara and how God surprised him with the unexpected opportunity to save 6,000 Jews from the Nazis. When in your life has God surprised you with an opportunity (large or small) to bless someone? What happened?
 - c. Descendants of the 6,000 Jews saved by Sugihara have drilled into their children and grandchildren the notion that, “You are the lucky ones. You are the special ones. You would have never been born but for the brave actions of one man, Sugihara. You must not waste this gift of life. You must do something meaningful.” Imagine you were one of those descendants. How would you feel about being alive? Do you feel that way about your own life? Why or why not?
 - d. Doing something meaningful life doesn’t have to mean saving 6,000 Jews. It can be as simple as transforming many tiny moments into something more beautiful. Jeff gave the example of his Uncle Tom using a towel to do the twist and the example of a little girl whose simple prayer lifted the mood in a diner. Tell us about a time in your recent experience where one person’s presence and conduct had a meaningful positive impact on a simple situation.
6. Jeff said, “If I were to summarize, in its simplest form, Jesus’ answer to the question, “What is the meaning of my life?” – it would be that life is a sacred trust. Therefore, in each situation we find ourselves, we should ask: ***What does it look like to create meaning in this moment? How can I do something beautiful for God in this moment?***” Tell us about a situation (of any type) that you’re facing right now. How would you answer the two key italicized questions with regard to your situation?
- a. Jesus said, “To whom much is given, of them shall much be required.” Luke 12:48. What do you think that means? If we fail to live a meaningful life, how do you think God will judge us? What will be the consequences?

Last question on next page . . .

- b. Jesus also said, “Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” Luke 6:38. What are the implications of that verse for all who see their life as a sacred trust meant to benefit and bless others?

Answer Key For Question 2

- 2.a. Grantor
- 2.b. Trust Assets
- 2.c. Trustee
- 2.d. Beneficiary