

You Belong Here

Sermon 2018-09-16 - Back to Church Sunday - The Rev. Christopher M. Klukas
Genesis 2:19-25; Psalm 139:1-14; Romans 8:18-25; Matthew 11:25-30

- Why are you here? This is one of the first questions they will ask you at a Dr.'s office.
- If you are new, what brought you here today? If you are already a member or a regular attender, why do you spend your time here?
- The Christian faith and participation in the Church help us to meet some of our core human needs. Today we will talk about three of them. Community, purpose, and hope.

Community

- "It is not good for the man to be alone." Genesis 2:18.
- God made humans to be in community with others.
 - Loneliness and depression often go hand in hand in a downward spiral.
 - Facebook and social media has made connection with other humans both easier and harder at the same time.
 - Easier because we can reconnect with people across so many of the chapters of our lives.
 - Harder, because it is a challenge to take these social media interactions to a deeper level. We also tend to project the image that we want others to see, rather than the truth of what is really going on in our lives.
- We need community in our lives. Honest, real, authentic community.
 - Image of corn which can't grow unless it is planted with lots of other corn for pollination from the wind. One of the ways we grow as people is through the relationships in our lives.
- Beyond that basic human need for community, a Christian needs community to grow specifically in the area of their faith.
 - Just like you can't play football by yourself, you can't be a Christian by yourself.
 - As iron sharpens iron. Proverbs 27:17.
- Hebrew 10:23-25 "Do not neglect to meet together"
 - The church encourages us, it can be hard to be a Christian and to struggle against the world and our own temptation to sin. Our brothers and sisters in the church can help us through these things and pick us up when we feel down.
 - The church helps us to hold fast to the faith

Purpose

- What is the meaning of life? This is a philosophical question that people have pondered for millenia.
 - Some have said the meaning of life is love in human relationships. As we have already discussed, community is a human need, and having community can contribute to a sense of purpose, but you can still feel your life has no purpose even when you are surrounded by family and friends.

- Others have said that the meaning of life is in pleasure. I'm sure we can all think of people who have sought this route and have found themselves lacking. There are plenty of unhappy millionaires, and plenty of people who have ruined their lives through drugs, alcohol, and other addictions.
 - Some have proposed that there is no purpose at all. That we are here by random chance. This is a hopeless solution that leaves us feeling empty. People might resign themselves to this, but no one is really happy with it!
- The Bible gives some clear answers to this question of the meaning of life.
 - Psalm 139:13-14. God loved you and delighted in you even as he was forming you in your mother's womb.
- Each of us was made for a relationship with God.
 - St. Augustine, "for You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."¹
 - People sometimes try to find their purpose in their career, in their interests, or in their relationships. There is nothing wrong with enjoying your work, or your hobbies, or your relationships, but if we try to find our purpose in them, it won't work. They will all come up wanting.
 - We were made for God, and we need him to find our purpose and peace.

Hope

- The big problem is that all of us, in our natural state, are separated from God because of our sin, and therefore we cannot fulfill our purpose.
 - "*but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear*" (Isaiah 59:2, ESV).
 - What is sin? Sin is missing the mark of God's best for us.
- Our sin also separates us from those around us which makes it difficult to maintain relationships and community.
- Finally, sin causes death, sickness, violence, and destruction in the world.
- Despite all of this sin and destruction, the Bible gives us the hope that everything wrong will be made right, including our separation from God. Romans 8:23-24 - "In this hope we are saved"
- Jesus said, "Come to me all who..." (Matthew 11:28-30). In Jesus we find our rest, our community, our hope, and our purpose.

Prayer of Repentance and Faith

Lord Jesus Christ, I confess my faults, shortcomings, sins, and rebellious acts, and ask you to forgive me. I embrace you, Lord Jesus, as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for your atoning death on the cross in obedience to your Father's will to put away my sins. I enthrone you, Lord Jesus, to be in charge of every part of my life, and I ask you to indwell and empower me with your Holy Spirit, so that I may live as your faithful follower from now on. Amen.²

¹ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, Chapter 1.

² *To be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism*