

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

August 9, 2026 *"Beauty: The Beauty of Purpose. Why do I exist?"*

I Intro.

For all practical purposes summer is over. TCS schools began this week. We're still a month away from the official start of fall, and things will be cranking back up. You'll want to keep up with everything that's happening at NCC. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. This is our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family. If there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Sunday.

I want to thank George for kicking off this series last week with the *"beauty of generosity"*. I also want to reiterate George's emphasis about being a contributor, investor, in the work we see God doing at NCC. There's really no church in our area doing what we're doing. And it's important we support being a place where many who feel like there's no community of faith to belong find a safe place here. Your generosity, giving, helps us to continue to serve the community through a variety of ministries, serve our online family who join us virtually, and have actually visited us. And help create a place for you and those who come here to meet God and to grow. **You are making an impact on the work of Jesus!**

What is beauty and why does it matter? We're taking the idea of what beauty is from Dostoevsky's quote from *"The Idiot"*. (1869) ***"Beauty will save the world."*** The Russian dissident and author Dostoevsky had a deep and profound Christian faith. In his book *"The Idiot"*, Dostoevsky was reacting to an old religion that wasn't able to respond effectively to a changing world.

Let's look at what was happening in culture in 1869.

- 1. Young people were rejecting traditional religion and morality, looking for something that would help them understand and live in their changing world.**
 - 2. People were being drawn towards political power to enforce the type of world that they wanted to see.**
 - 3. People were losing their ability to live humbly, practice compassion, and mercy, and to genuinely love others in spite of how bad society got.**
 - 4. People were growing skeptical, disillusioned, and clinging to all sorts of other beliefs and doctrines looking for something to base their life on.**
 - 5. People were looking for something, anything, real and meaningful to devote their lives to.**
- The world in 1869 was changing, facing huge obstacles, very much like our world. Religion, or really anything else, wasn't speaking life or hope into that changing world. People were looking for something that would explain the mysteries and complexities of life. That would give this struggling

generation something to believe in and hold onto. Traditional religion wasn't doing it. And no one was stepping out. So, Dostoevsky proposed a spirituality, an understanding of God, that highlighted the natural elements of a life devoted to something significant and greater. He called this— *“beauty”*. Dostoevsky was saying; our role was not to push the world into some form of moral conformity. To make everyone do what we think they should do. The answer wasn't just to have people do religion harder. But to draw people to Jesus by the saving beauty of Christ. And people who were searching, would see in the followers of Jesus, practicing the disciplines we find in a life devoted to Jesus, a life that they could find purpose in. Not forcing others to live a certain way. Convincing them what they should do. But simply by living Jesus principles out in our daily lives. These **practices that displayed beauty would inspire awe and wonder, and point to Jesus**. I want to return to the definition of *“purpose”*. Think about what you believe *“purpose”* to mean, and why it's so important. In 2002 a book came out. ***“The Purpose Driven Life”***. It's a 40 day personal spiritual journey of God's five purposes for us. It was on the NYT Bestseller List for almost two years, and by 2020 had sold 50 million copies in more than 130 different languages. Obviously, it tapped into a basic human need to live a purposefully directed life. **Why was this book written and why was it so popular?** I believe it's because of all the questions we want to have answered, at the top of our list is: **“Why do I exist?” “What is my purpose?”**

Why is the idea of *“purpose”* so desirable?

Let's say this story might be true. The names have been left out to protect no one. A while back, I called our regular HVAC company to help find a water leak in our master closet. I knew it was the A/C drain. But they came and said it was a plumbing issue. So, I called a different plumbing company. But in fact it turned out to be the A/C drain, and they fixed it. So, I called the original company back, and told them what happened and asked for a refund. They misdiagnosed the issue...AND didn't fix it. I was told by the receptionist that they had sent a repair person to my house, and get this; *“their purpose was to make money, they couldn't give a refund”*. My response...as calmly as I could was; *“Your purpose ISN'T to make money. YOUR purpose was to provide a quality product that people are willing to give you money for. And you didn't do that.”* I spoke to the owner and got my money back. Purpose seems to be an important idea. But I believe we often lose sight of what our purpose is supposed to be. We may start out with an idea of what our purpose is, but we can get distracted. I think that the receptionist had drifted out of alignment with what was the original understanding of the purpose of that HVAC company.

So, questions. **What do you believe finding your purpose means?** (Don't say what you think YOUR purpose is specifically). And; **Why is finding your purpose so important?**

Scripture. This is a pretty standard 'go to' passage many of us have heard more than once. It's not going to need a lot of unpacking. But like that HVAC receptionist had drifted in their understanding of their purpose, sometimes we just need a reminder. I'll connect this back to our original statement. **Ephesians 2:8-10. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

Let's look again at what people in 1869 were dealing with when Dostoevsky penned the quote: ***“Beauty will save the world.”*** But first, and this is the honest truth. I wish I didn't have to say this as

a preacher (but you know how we can be). I did not backfill the original list of issues after reading the passage. I had the passage from previous study planning out this series and this message, and just dropped it into a shared Google doc I keep about upcoming series. Later I did some AI research on why Dostoevsky wrote *“The Idiot”*, and what was happening in society in his day. That was the 5 point list I showed you earlier. Then I went back to reread our passage, and the passage virtually answered the problems in society line by line. **What did I say to myself? BEAUTIFUL!!**

How does living this God designed purpose-filled life, shine beauty in our world? And make our life meaningful? Revisit what people were looking for when Dostoevsky penned this quote.

1. Young people were rejecting traditional religion and morality looking for something that would help them understand and live in their world. Traditional religion tends to be works and effort based. *“Do good, get good”*. There are so many stories in scripture of people believing the bad in your life was because you did bad. (Job, the man born blind). We still have to fight the belief in a works based relationship with God. Religion drifts into a forced morality that doesn’t really bring peace. Paul said in this passage; it’s not how good you are that brings the grace of God. Practicing religion doesn’t earn you God’s favor. Your relationship with God is solely because of God’s great generosity and kindness. The purpose we eagerly seek is a gift from God— through his grace.
Want to know how to find your purpose. Open yourself to receive the gift of grace from God.

2. People were being drawn towards political power to enforce the type of world that they wanted to see. We need to talk about the importance of humility in searching for meaning and purpose. If you could bring about the life, and purpose by your own effort, you would take the credit for it. Have you noticed people who believe they’re solely responsible for their own success, where they are in life, are the most insufferable, arrogant, and unkind? Politicians are the worst. *“I was raised as a mud farmer, and lifted myself up...by myself”*. *“So, I alone can bring about the world everyone wants.”* If you’re wired like me, what moves you is the athlete, celebrity, musician, who humbly thanks God for their talent. The athlete is not saying God caused their team to win. But these people say they are humbled in realizing they’ve been given a special and unique gift. And they want to honor God in how they use that giftedness— understanding of their “purpose”.

Be active in what you strongly believe in. But understand, rules, laws, and legislation won’t bring about a beautiful world. Rules, laws, and political power only sets boundaries for bad behavior. It doesn’t inspire good behavior. And just makes us boastful. In order for REAL change to happen, we have to operate out of God’s gifting to us rather than using the world’s power. In full humility, knowing it’s not our own effort. We constantly do the work to make sure we’re aligning ourselves with something greater than any earthly powers. Being saved from arrogance, boasting, deeply rooted in humility is a gift from God.

Want to know how to find your purpose. Inspire others by humbly using your god-given gifts to create beauty.

3. People were losing their ability to live humbly, practice compassion, and mercy, and loving others in spite of how bad society got. If this isn’t an indictment of our society, I can’t think of one. People are calling empathy, toxic and weak. We’re drawn to power no matter how ruthless it is. We’ve said kindness, compassion, and generosity is only for people like us. We’ve lost the ability to see EVERYONE as God’s handiwork. Paul was reminding the people of Ephesus they were *“God’s handiwork”*. It wasn’t just them so they could do good things. EVERYONE was *“God’s handiwork”*.

Later in Ephesians 2, Paul reminds the Ephesians that; ***“the wall of hostility has been torn down. We are no longer divided. There is one body, one flesh.”*** Then Paul says; ***“Consequently, there are no longer foreigners and strangers... but fellow citizens, members of the family of God.”*** If others watch us live a beautiful life, treating everyone as God’s handiwork, an icon (art that represents something holy), something beautiful, and priceless, then we can literally save the world. This lays the foundation for our purpose. This is the heart we carry out God’s work.

Want to know how to find your purpose. Grow the ability to see we ALL are God’s handiwork and treat them with love and respect.

4. People were growing skeptical, disillusioned, and clinging to all sorts of other things. Not only are we God’s handiwork, but we are *“created in Christ Jesus”*. You are continually being born anew. A fundamental transformation in your identity. If we can hold that truth close to us, wherever we are, whomever we’re with, the desire to grow and practice humility, compassion, and mercy will just flow out of us. Our old self is being pressed out of us. So, if you struggle with any of those things that Dostoevsky was addressing in 1869. Skepticism, disillusionment, despair, leaving religion, and grabbing anything you could get your hands on trying to make it the solution, the answer, the fix. Practicing the elements that give our lives purpose, will sweep away skepticism and disillusionism. Know there is this great transformative work continually being done within you, that will replace your anxiety, fear, discouragement, with peace, hope, and encouragement.

Want to know how to find your purpose. Realize that God, through Christ Jesus, is actively transforming you into who you need to be to find your purpose.

5. People were looking for something, anything, to devote their lives to. What better thing to devote our lives to than do the good works God has called us to. It’s pretty plain. Jesus said; *“Obey MY commands”*. And what were the two greatest commands? ***“Love God...Love others”*** The *“good works”* we do will fulfill these two greatest commands. **Do you want to know how to find your purpose?** Discover the way you love others best. Volunteer, children, students, tech, cook, sit and visit, write cards, etc. Finding your purpose will help you say *“no”* to the things that aren’t your purpose. Purpose is working on the direction of your life over the destination. And that direction is the work done before you, you, and others will continue.

III Challenge.

Discovering your *“purpose”* requires work. Your purpose won’t just fall out of the sky. More often than not, you’re going to try some things that you think are your purpose, and you’re going to find out they’re not. That’s okay. That’s how this works. We believe God honors your heart. Finding your purpose will feed your soul. It makes everything make sense. It won’t always be easy. In fact, we can guarantee that it will be hard. But purpose will make your hard work and effort significant. Purpose isn’t something you create. It’s something you discover. A person living into their purpose is devastatingly beautiful. Your purpose is the convergence of who you are, what the world needs, and what God has called you to do. People notice it, are drawn to it, and it makes an impact. You’re working hard. But your purpose will fill your battery rather than drain it. And that’s what most of us want out of our lives. And finding your purpose will be absolutely beautiful...and will save the world.