

Purpose Driven
January 24, 2010
(Epiphany 3 – Year C)
Luke 4: 14-21

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

On days like today, when we have our annual meeting after the [10 o'clock] worship service, my mind goes back to my days as a businessman and an accountant.

I used to work at an employee benefits and trust company in Houston where I was on the senior management team as the Chief Financial Officer.

And every year, a few weeks after the yearend of December 31, we would have the infamous Senior Management Retreat.

The word "retreat" in Senior Management Retreat was a big stretch – Because the only thing that made the Senior Management Retreat a "retreat" was that it was on a Saturday and we got to wear jeans to the office.

On the Saturday morning of the retreat, we would gather for donuts and coffee in the boardroom at the office.

Then I would present the financial report, detailing how the company performed in the previous fiscal year.

After the financial report, a management consultant would come in to help us to write a new mission statement for the company.

Now the company boardroom had one wall that was all windows that looked outside.

And invariably, the Senior Management Retreat took place on the first Saturday of the year when the weather had warmed back up into the 70s.

So we would look longingly out the window at blue skies and sunshine, while we were cooped up inside writing a mission statement for the company.

For hours, we would wordsmith this mission statement, which quickly became a big, long, run-on sentence.

Finally, after about 4 o'clock, we had come up with a mission statement that no one was really happy with, and that no one would actually read or remember –

That is, until the next year's Senior Management Retreat, when we would have to re-word it all over again.

Beginning in the 1980s, management consultants and strategic planners told most companies and organizations - and churches - that they needed to have mission statements, to clarify their purpose.

Yet Jesus was well ahead of the curve, articulating his own mission statement at a hometown worship service, almost 2000 years ago.

Jesus began his ministry with some incredible teaching throughout Galilee.

Then he went to his hometown of Nazareth, the town where he had been brought up and nourished.

He went to the synagogue for worship on Saturday, just like he did every Saturday of his life.

Jesus was given the book of Isaiah to read aloud.

And Jesus decided that this was as good a time as any to articulate his mission statement.

So Jesus opened the scroll to the 61st chapter of Isaiah and read this:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To let the oppressed go free,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Then Jesus looked up and said:

“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Jesus' mission statement is clear.

God's purpose is to:

1. Bring good news to the poor.
2. Proclaim release to all those who are held captive
3. Heal those who are sick, both outwardly and inwardly
4. Proclaim the Lord's favor and love to everyone.

Jesus did not take hours sitting around a boardroom table to come up with his mission statement.

Jesus did not use a management consultant to come up with his statement of purpose.

Jesus used words of scripture to articulate what his ministry would be about:

1. Good news to the poor
2. Release to the captives
3. Healing to the sick
4. Love and favor to all people.

Several years ago, in 2002, Rick Warren, the mega church pastor of Saddleback Church, wrote a book called *The Purpose Driven Life*.

This book challenges people to go on a 40-day spiritual journey, reading a chapter each day, to find their purpose in life.

The Purpose Driven Life has sold more than 30 million copies world-wide, making it the best selling non-fiction hardcover book in history.

The amazing success of Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life* indicates that people are hungry to have a purpose.

People want to have a mission statement for their life.

And Rick Warren's book outlines 5 overarching purposes for our life:

According to *The Purpose Driven Life*, we are created and made for:

- * Worship
- * Fellowship
- * Discipleship
- * Ministry
- * Mission.

Now *The Purpose Driven Life* uses hundreds of scripture references and quotations to back up its message.

Yet what is amazing, and a bit troubling, is that Rick Warren never mentions or quotes from Luke 4:14-21.

Rick Warren never quotes from the passage when Jesus goes to the synagogue in his hometown, opens up Isaiah and masterfully summarizes the purpose for this life.

However, I want you to go ahead and create a mission statement, or a set of mission statements, for your life.

And just like Jesus, you don't need a management consultant.

And just like Jesus, scripture is a good place to start.

You might want to create a different mission statement for various aspects of your life.

Then compare and contrast your mission statement with Jesus' mission statement and purpose.

When creating a mission statement for your life as an employee and a worker, you might start out by saying that your purpose is to move up the ladder and to make as big a salary as you can.

Yet after reviewing Jesus' purpose driven life, you might change your mission statement to be

To bring release and hope to those in your office who are mistreated or ignored.

When creating a mission statement for your life as a parent, you might start by saying that your purpose is to raise children who will be strong, good-looking and above average in every way.

Yet after reviewing Jesus' purpose driven life, you might change your mission statement to be

To raise children who proclaim God's love and favor with everyone they meet.

When creating a mission statement for your life as a retired person or someone who works out of the home, you might start by saying that your purpose is to be healthy, secure and safe.

Yet after reviewing Jesus' purpose driven life, you might change your mission statement to be

To get out of your comfort zone and bring good news to the poor by actually speaking to them and by offering your money more generously to others.

Jesus was clear in his mission statement.

Jesus was clear in his purpose.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus went to his hometown for weekly Saturday worship.

He opened the book of Isaiah to chapter 61, and he gave us his mission statement.
And he gave us *our* mission statement.

For Rick Warren is right about this:
You are created for a purpose.

You are here on this earth
To bring good news to the poor.

You are here on this earth
To release and forgive,
And to comfort and heal,
And to proclaim God's favor and love to everyone.

And today, *today*, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

AMEN.

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