

Advent || 01

The “Why” Behind Christmas (and everything else)

Sermon Synopsis: God's purpose behind Christmas is to unite everything in Christ, giving us an exciting framework to live from.

Ephesians 1:9-10 (ESV)

making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Simon Sinek: start with why.¹ What you do must be fueled by why you're doing it.

To truly find meaning, your plan must have a purpose. Christmas: why do we do all this? [lights]

GOD HAS A PLAN **AP!**

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God's plan: to send his Son to be born of a virgin, live a perfect life, die, and rise again (deets)

Our plans: the details, decisions, actions, etc. (good examples: love neighbor, incarnation)

Details are also where we can get hung up: Should I do _____, or _____?

Details are also where cold religiously happens: I guess I'll go to church.

Details are also where we get burnt out and tired: Why am I doing this?

See...God doesn't just have a plan; He has a purpose too.

GOD'S PURPOSE DRIVES GOD'S PLANS **AP!**

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The purpose fuels the plan. The purpose fuels everything God does.

And if we could wrap our hearts around it, it would motivate us too. **illust: why dad? Cause I said so!**

We need a why. A purpose. Ever felt part of something big? **JFK²**

God's purpose:

to unite all things in him things in heaven and things on earth.

Unite (ἀνακεφαλαιόω - anakephalaioō)

I. Translated in the ESV as “unite,” it's literal meaning is to “sum up.”

A. Context: orators that would sum up their argument.

B. To sum up meant to condense into a summary.

1. Example: Romans 13:9

Romans 13:9

For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

2. **illust:** ever known someone who can just say what needs to be said in one or two words? **LASER**. They can bring together a lot of complex and seemingly contradicting ideas into a simple phrase. That's what's going on.

3. Only in this case, God's plan is to “sum up” or “to bring together” the *universe*.

a) Paul is saying, God's plan is to bring order to everything.³

Examples of “everything” that God is ordering

1. **CREATION** **AP!**

Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

2. **INSTITUTIONS**

Ephesians 2:14 (ESV)

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

3. **RELATIONSHIPS**

Ephesians 4:16 (NIV)

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

1. **YOU**

Psalms 23:3 (ESV)

He restores my soul.

Soul (Nephesh) = the whole person⁴

Psalms 119:175 (NIV)

Let me (nephesh) live that I may praise you

<— let my whole being praise you.

On some of our minds when seeing the world is *how* can he bring it together?

I. I love mayonnaise.

A. It turns out, mayonnaise is pretty complex. It involves two liquids that don't mix.

1. What you need is an emulsifier.⁵

a) Emulsifiers = greatest thing to happen to food since my mouth!

b) They take two entities that don't seem to fit together and not only bring them together, but create something new and beautiful out of their togetherness that was not previously possible. [**Preach**]

(a) Our souls are disintegrating, our relationships are broken, our institutions are unjust, and as Paul says, “creation was subjected to frustration.”

i) We need someone who can take two disparate entities that don't mix well and bring them together. **JESUS!!!!**

GOOD NEWS

to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1:10b)

PREACH: Christ can put your life back together! He can deal with anything you got. Gimme.

- When you're deflated – **Jesus fills you up** (Ephesians 3:19) **API!**
- When you're down – **Jesus raises you up** (Colossians 3:1)
- When you're dejected – **Jesus is inexpressible joy** (1 Peter 1:8)
- When you're weak – **Jesus makes you strong** (Ephesians 6:11)
- When you're falling apart – **Jesus restores you** (1 Peter 5:10)
- When you're faithless – **Jesus is Faithful** (Revelation 19:11a)
- When you don't know what to believe – **Jesus is True** (Revelation 19:11b)
- When you're about to give up – **Jesus keeps your feet from stumbling** (Jude 1:24)
- When you were passed over for promotion – **Jesus still chose you** (John 15:16)
- When your spouse leaves you – **Jesus says, "I never will."** (Hebrews 13:5)
- When no one wanted you around – **Jesus says, "follow me."** (Matthew 4:19)
- When you feel stupid – **Jesus is your wisdom** (1 Corinthians 1:30a)
- When you feel unworthy – **Jesus is your righteousness** (1 Corinthians 1:30b)
- When you feel dirty – **Jesus is your sanctification** (1 Corinthians 1:30c)
- When you're thirsty – **Jesus is rivers of living water** (John 7:38)
- When you're hungry – **Jesus is the bread of life** (John 6:35)
- When you're out of our mind – **Jesus is peace that surpasses understanding** (Philippians 4:7)
- When you're discouraged – **Jesus is your comfort** (2 Corinthians 1:5)
- When your wallet is empty – **Jesus is your shepherd, you shall not want** (Psalm 23:1)
- When your career is falling apart – **Jesus keeps your confidence together** (2 Corinthians 3:4-5)
- When your health is failing – **Jesus renews your strength** (Isaiah 40:31)
- When your youth is fading – **Jesus renews your inner being** (2 Corinthians 4:16)
- When your heart is broken – **Jesus dwells in your heart through faith** (Ephesians 3:17)
- When you're a work in progress – **Jesus will bring you to completion** (Philippians 1:6)
- When you feel like you can't make it – **Jesus will presents you blameless** (Jude 1:24)
- When times are uncertain – **Jesus is your assurance** (Colossians 2:2)
- When times are unstable – **Jesus is the rock** (1 Corinthians 10:4)
- When times are insecure – **Jesus is your refuge** (Psalm 46:1)
- When we've lost our "why" – **Jesus is your reason** (Romans 15:17)
- When you don't know where to go – **Jesus is the way** (John 14:6)
- When you can't find your way – **Jesus is the light** (John 8:12)
- When you don't know how to get there – **Jesus is the door** (John 10:7)
- When you don't know who to trust – **Jesus is the truth** (John 14:6)
- When you don't know what to do – **Jesus says "Learn from me"** (Matthew 11:29a)
- When you say, "But I don't want to be hurt" – **Jesus says, "I'm gentle at heart"** (Matthew 11:29b)
- When you say, "But I'm tired" – **Jesus says, "Come to me all you who are weary—I will give you rest"** (Matthew 11:28)
- When you say, "But I'm afraid" – **Jesus says, "Take courage"** (Acts 23:11)
- And when it feels like everything is falling apart – **Jesus can hold it all together** (Colossians 1:17)
- THIS is God's purpose: to UNITE all things in Jesus. SO Jesus starts with YOU.

Why is this talk about God's grand purpose so important?

I've got things to do! Why spend so much time pontificating about cosmic realities, when I've got holiday blues, family drama, presents to wrap, a house to clean, carols, etc.

Because without a large framework directing WHY you do what you do, you can get lost.

Without purpose you can get lost in your plans.

Without a destination, you can get lost in the details.

Ex: research shows that not having a sense of purpose is highly discouraging at work.⁶

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Those who cannot connect their work to a larger meaning can feel burnt out, unfulfilled.

Why? Because we were hardwired with eternity on our hearts.⁷ Big capacity—only one who can fill.

IDENTITY IS FORMED WHEN GOD'S PURPOSE DRIVES YOUR PLANS

God has a "why." God has a purpose, not only for the cosmos, but for you.

And that's why we pause to remember and celebrate advent and the coming of Jesus.

Because through Jesus, **God is uniting all things, and YOU get to be a part of that.**

This isn't so much tradition and Christmas carols as it is a *deeply meaningful reminder to reorient our perspective*. We don't always see how God's cosmic activity to unite all things matters to us, so we must intentionally invite him, carol: "let every heart prepare him room."

How: Begin to ask questions that develop our awareness of God in all we do:

Jesus, what do you want to do in this situation?

API!

Jesus, what do you want to do in this relationship?

Jesus, what do you want to do in this suffering?

Jesus, what do you want to do in me?

[BAND COME UP]

Reflect:

Where have you felt true joy today? What has troubled you today?

What has challenged you today? Have you noticed God's presence in any of this?

¹ Simon Sinek. How Great Leaders Inspire Action. TED. September 2009. https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en Accessed on September 3, 2019

² Robbin Phillips. *Brains on Fire: Igniting Powerful, Sustainable, Word of Mouth Movements*. pp.12-13. (Wiley). Kindle Edition.

³ Frank Theilman. *Ephesians*. (ECNT; Baker Academic, 2010). 67

⁴ See "Nephesh" The Bible Project. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_igCcWAMAM

⁵ Food-Info. What are emulsifiers and why are they used? <http://www.food-info.net/uk/qa/qa-fi63.htm>

⁶ Daniel H. Pink. *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. (Riverhead, 2009). 129-145

⁷ Ecclesiastes 3:11