

HEBS 12.2: THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE [Mark 11.1-10; 14.32-36; 15.25-32]
Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford 1/4/07

I love celebrations – give me any excuse, and I will gladly throw a party
So the idea of holding a Celebration Sunday today appealed to me.
Yes, let's celebrate the way in which God has blessed us over these past 40 days of
purpose – let's have some prizes for those people who've learnt their memory verses –
let's praise God with a Mexican wave. Yes, let's celebrate.

And what better day to have a celebration than Palm Sunday
For the first Palm Sunday was a day of celebration.
And what an exciting day it must have been.
For Jesus came riding into Jerusalem with all his friends waving palm branches and
shouting their alleluias
It was a bit like a victorious football team driving around London in an open air bus,
with all their supporters waving their scarves and shouting 'Arsenal/Chelsea' or
whoever.
Yes, that first Palm Sunday must have been a wonderfully exciting day - I would have
loved to have been part of the crowd on that day.

I wonder, how did Jesus feel?
Did Jesus get carried away by the emotion of the day?
Not at all. Far from being over the moon with happiness, Jesus felt desperately sad. So
sad, that he began to cry (see Hebs 3.7).
Luke tells us that Jesus "**wept**" over the city, because the people "**did not recognise the
time when God came to save**" them. (Lk 19.41,44).
Jesus was desperately upset, because the crowds failed to recognise why God had sent
him.
Jesus wasn't interested in personal success – the adoration of the crowds didn't turn his
head - Jesus was only interested in fulfilling God's purpose for his life – and that
purpose was to turn the hearts of men and women back to God, and help them discover
God's love, God's forgiveness, and God's purpose for their lives.

Four days later Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane.
Jesus knew that his enemies were out to get him – he knew that Judas was about to
betray him – and that the pain & disgrace of dying on a cross lay ahead of him.
And knowing all this he began to cry again.
Mark tells us: "**Distress and anguish came over him**" and he said to his disciples:
"**The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me**" (Mk 14.33,34).
The thought of ending up on a cross horrified him – indeed, he wouldn't have been
human if he hadn't feared such a death.
He "**prayed that if possible he might not have to go through that time of suffering.**
**'Father, my Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup of suffering
away from me. Yet not what I want, but what you want'**" (14.35,36).
Anybody else would have done a runner – but not Jesus.
Jesus was a man with a purpose – and his purpose was to live for God, whatever the
cost. "**Not what I want, but what you want**". For Jesus, fulfilling God's purpose cost
him his life.

The very next day – just five days after Palm Sunday – Jesus was crucified.

The pain of the nails through his hands, the pain of his body hanging on the tree, must have been immense.

But just as bad, if not worse, were the taunts of the passers-by. Nobody cared for him – nobody understood him – instead they mocked him

“The chief priests and teachers of the Law jeered at Jesus, saying to each other, ‘He saved others, but he cannot save himself’ (Mark 15.31).

The irony of it all was that there was truth in those taunts: it was precisely because he came to save others, he could not save himself. Yes, had he come down from the Cross, he could never have fulfilled God’s purpose for his life.

Yes, a purpose-driven life can be a costly business.

Some 35 or so years later the Letter to the Hebrews was written.

It was written to encourage a group of Christians who were finding the going tough – not for them ‘40 days of purpose’ - some indeed were being tempted to give up following Jesus altogether.

Listen to these two verses from Hebrews 12.2-3: **“Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing about the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right-hand side of God. Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners. So do not let yourselves be discouraged and give up”** Or as Peterson puts it in his paraphrase *‘The Message’*: **“Keep your eyes on JESUS, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed - that exhilarating finish in and with God - he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever. And now he’s THERE, in the place of honour, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. THAT will shoot adrenaline into your souls”**

For the last 40 or so days we have been thinking of what God’s purpose is for our lives. As Rick Warren points out, fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives can be a wonderful privilege – *“although it is a big responsibility, it is also an incredible honour to be used by God”*.

Fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives gives our lives meaning and significance.

In living purpose-driven lives we become the people God intended us to be.

But it can also be a hard and difficult business – for as Rick Warren points out, it involves yielding *“our rights, expectations, dreams, plans and ambitions to”* God. (p286). Serving God always comes with a price tag.

Yet as the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews points out, ultimately it is a rewarding business – for God blesses those who serve him, if not in this life, then in the next.

So, if your finding living life for God tough, don’t get discouraged: **“keep your eyes fixed on Jesus”**.