

G'Day saints!

Just a reminder that there are Bible's in front of you and there's an outline in the bulletin for you to take down notes if that helps you concentrate

Let me pray for God's help and understanding. Let's pray...

Intro/Search for the meaning of life

There have been many attempts to search for the meaning of life...

[Café Church- Ask Siri]

[PowerPoint 1-Monty Python]

In the Monty Python movie: *The Meaning of life* - at the end of the movie they say: "*Well, it's nothing very special. Try to be nice to people, avoid eating fat, read a good book every now and then, get some walking in, and try to live together in peace and harmony with people of all creeds and nations.*"

[PowerPoint 2-Meaning 42]

In Douglas Adams' popular comedy book, movie and television series *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything is the numeric solution "42". It takes a giant supercomputer called Deep Thought seven and a half million years of calculation to come up with the answer "42". When this answer is met with confusion and anger from its constructors, Deep Thought explains that "I think the problem, to be quite honest with you, is that you've never actually known what the question is."

In the continuation of Douglas Adams' book, the question is proposed to be "How many roads must a man walk down, before you can call him a man" from Bob Dylan's "*Blowin' in the Wind*."

[How many roads must a man walk down
Before you can call him a man?...]

[PowerPoint 3-Simpsons]

In *The Simpsons* episode "Homer the Heretic", a representation of God agrees to tell Homer what the meaning of life is, but the show's credits begin to roll just as he starts to say what it is...

[PowerPoint 4-Person of Interest]

In *Person of Interest* season 5 episode 13, an artificial intelligence referred to as *The Machine* says that the secret of life is "*Everyone dies alone. But if you mean something to someone, if you help someone, or love someone. If even a single person remembers you then maybe you never really die at all.*"

[PowerPoint 5-Other meanings...]

Other popular views about the meaning of life are:

To realize one's potential - to become the best person you've always wanted to be - to seek happiness and flourish

To achieve biological perfection - to live as long as possible - to live forever - or die trying

To seek wisdom and knowledge - to know as much as possible about as many things as possible

To do good, to do the right thing - so as to leave the world a better place, than you found it - to do your best to leave every situation better than you found it - to help others

So the search for the meaning of life has come up with some bizarre answers and some noble answers...

The Promise (Isaiah 55:10-11)

However, the Bible gives us a different and more satisfactory answer

In our OT reading in Isaiah 55:10-11

[PowerPoint 6-Isaiah 55:10-11]

[If you'd like to turn there now]

God says just like the rain and snow come down from Heaven and water the earth and causes plant life to grow - achieving the purpose intended - before the water evaporates and returns to the Heavens again

So it's the same with God's Word - when it comes down from Heaven.

God's Word is Jesus

We know that from John 1:14

[PowerPoint 7-John 1:14]

⁴The Word [JESUS] became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

So God's Word - Jesus - comes down from Heaven and doesn't return to God empty - but instead achieves the purpose God intended

God's Word - Jesus - came to this earth - lived and taught -

He was like a walking talking Bible

And He came to give life

We know that from John 10:10

[PowerPoint 8-John 10:10]

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

So Jesus came to show people how to live a life that pleases God - a fulfilling and complete life

He also came to die on a cross - to defeat sin - and give forgiveness of sins

And He also came to rise again - to defeat death - and give life everlasting

So as the promise in Isaiah said - God's Word - Jesus - came down from Heaven and achieved what God intended - that is to give life

And then God's Word - returned to God - not empty - but accomplishing what God intended - to give an opportunity for everyone to have life in Jesus - if they care to believe in Him

The Promise in Action (Phil 1:12-26)

Then in our NT reading from Phil 1:12-26

[Which you can turn to now]

The Apostle Paul shows us God's promise - that His Word will not return empty to Him but achieve His purposes - Paul shows this Promise - in action!

And He gives us God's meaning for life

[PowerPoint 9-v21]

It's there at the beginning of v21

For to me, to live is Christ

For Paul - life is all about Jesus

How does that pan out for Paul?

[PowerPoint 10-Chains]

A. Paul's Chains destroy barriers (vv12-14)

Paul says in vv12-14 that his chains and imprisonment - actually caused the Gospel - the Good News about Jesus - to break down barriers - even the palace guards - the soldiers guarding him - and there would be many of them taking shifts - even the soldiers chained to him - they all got to hear and understand that Paul was in prison - in chains - because of his faith in Jesus. So rather than prison being the end of his ministry - prison gave Paul further opportunities to advance the Good News of Jesus

Not only that - Paul's boldness and faith in trusting Jesus even in prison - actually encouraged his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ - the saints in Philippi - and it made them more confident to spread the Good News of Jesus - without being afraid. Their thinking was - if Paul is in jail and still spreading the word of Jesus - then they - not being in jail - can be confident and fearless in spreading the word of Jesus...

Application - What about us? Can't we be bold and without fear in our circumstances knowing that God can use us in whatever situation we are in to spread the Gospel in word and deed - remember God's promise is - that His word won't return to Him empty but achieve what He has planned

B. Main thing is that the Gospel is Preached (vv15-18)

[PowerPoint 10b-Main thing]

For Paul - in vv15 to 18 - the main thing is that the Gospel is preached

Paul's imprisonment has been a great incentive to preach the Gospel

This has meant the Gospel being preached with 2 different motives - Paul says

- a) Motive 1 - some have preached the Gospel - out of love for Paul - it has spurred them on to keep telling people about Jesus - so that Paul's imprisonment doesn't halt the spread of the Gospel
- b) Motive 2 - Others have preached the Gospel more now that Paul is out of the way in prison - they were doing this - to gain their own influence and prestige -and to be liked by more people like Paul. This was a wrong motive - they were jealous of Paul - and wanted the same recognition and accolades as he did

Paul's not concerned about right or wrong motives for preaching Jesus - the main thing - He says - is that people are hearing the message of Jesus - which is life changing to the one's hearing it. If the one's telling the message - have bad motives - Paul doesn't care - God can deal with that - the main thing is that everyone hears about Jesus - remember God's promise is that His word won't return to him empty but achieve what he intended

Application - God can use our prideful, self-seeking attempts to tell people about Jesus - just as He can use - our heartfelt compassionate attempts to tell people - lost from God - about Jesus. The main thing is we tell people about Jesus - God will do the rest - and the preaching of the belief of Jesus as our Lord and Saviour - as the only way to forgiveness and as the only to Heaven -

Paul says - is a great reason for us to rejoice. So whatever our methods here at St David's are to tell people about Jesus - they are all a cause for us to rejoice

C. Christ will be honoured in life or in death (vv19-20)

The bottom line for Paul is that all that is happening to him as he faces this difficult time in prison - God has a purpose for it.

What Paul is saying in v20 - is that God has put him in this situation - and God means it - even with all its problems and its difficulties - so that Paul can honour and speak highly of Jesus (exalt) - whether in all he does in life - or whether in the manner in which Paul accepts death for his ministry for Jesus. Either way Jesus will be honoured - by Paul's life or Paul's death.

In all of this Paul has 2 great supports - see v19

- a) Firstly - He knows the saints of Philippi are praying for him - and that encourages him and spurs him on - and gives him confidence
- b) And secondly - He knows God has provided the Holy Spirit to help him - Jesus promised when he left this earth - He would send the Holy Spirit - so Paul knows that the Holy Spirit will strengthen him

It doesn't matter how things go for Paul

If he dies - he dies with the martyrs crown - he has died for Jesus

If he lives - he lives his life for Jesus - as a preacher and witness of

Jesus

Application - Can we join with Paul - and say that our lives are the theatre in which people see the glory of Jesus displayed in our lives. As Christians we have the privileged responsibility - that by our life and our conduct - we either bring

glory to Jesus - or we bring shame to Jesus. So we need to ask ourselves today - do our lives bring glory or shame to Jesus?

And are we claiming those same 2 great supports Paul has - a) the prayers of the saints here at St. David's and b) the help of the Holy Spirit?

D. Live or die, which will Paul chose (vv21-24)

[PowerPoint 10d-Live/dive]

Meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) had been the **beginning** of life for Paul - Paul had been born again - and began life all over again - a life in Christ Jesus

And for Paul - Christ was the **massive gain** at the end of life too - because it would lead to Paul being with Jesus forever

So it's a win-win situation

If Paul lives - His life is about Jesus

If Paul dies - His life is with Jesus forever

So there's a dilemma for Paul

Christ has given Paul the **task** of life - to bring the message of Jesus to the Gentiles

And Jesus has given Paul the **strength** of life - and given Paul the all-sufficient grace even in Paul's weakness to accomplish this task to the Gentiles

For Paul - Christ was the **reward** of life -this reward of life was closer and closer fellowship with Jesus. If Jesus was not in Paul's life - then there would be nothing left in life. To Paul - Jesus was nothing less than life itself

But on the other-hand - and here's the dilemma - if Paul dies - see v21 - that is a massive gain to him - because death just brings him even closer to Jesus - and closer - forever

So Paul is swayed between 2 desires

Stay alive - and help the Philippians grow in joy and faith in Jesus

Or die - And be with Jesus forever

What will he choose?

Application - Can we join with Paul - and say we are in a win-win situation?

If we stay alive - we can live for Jesus and spread the Gospel

If we die - we can be with Jesus straightaway

What a beautiful dilemma

Yet for some - we might be afraid of dying?

Or we might have something holding us back?

We need not fear dying - we have Jesus forever if we die

The things that are holding us back? Things like family - wanting to see further family milestones - or wanting to complete some more significant achievements

These are our own selfish reasons for staying

But our life is not about us - Paul says

To live is Christ Jesus - Paul says

The meaning of life is Jesus - Paul says

So if we look at living and dying in terms of Jesus

We can join Paul as he says in v23-24

²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Can we join with Paul - and say it's better to depart and be with Jesus?

But it's good and necessary for the church family and the community that we live and remain alive - and continue serving and living for Jesus

E. Paul convinced that he will continue to progress the Philippians faith (vv25-26)

[PowerPoint 10e-Continue]

You see. Paul is convinced that he still has more time to serve Jesus and be with the saints in Philippi

But his conviction is not for his own benefit but so that more people can progress and have joy in their faith in Jesus. For Paul it's all about people knowing Jesus and boasting in what Jesus has done

Application - Can we join Paul and say our reason for wanting to remain alive - is simply to serve Jesus - and enable more people to believe in Jesus?

Conclusion/Challenges

So to sum up then -

[PowerPoint 11a-Conclusion/Challenges]

The meaning of life is - God's Word - JESUS

JESUS is God's Word made flesh

And God promises that His Word won't return to him empty - but accomplish what He planned

So as we live our lives in JESUS - we have that same promise that - our lives in Jesus will always accomplish what God planned and our lives in Jesus won't return to God empty!

So the meaning of life is JESUS - not 42

But 24x7 - JESUS

So let's take up three challenges today - as we leave this place...

[PowerPoint 11a-Model]

1. Are we modelling Jesus in our behaviour?

Is our purpose in life - to serve Jesus - encouraging non-believers to follow Jesus - and encouraging our fellow believers to become more like Jesus?

Are we using our circumstances to show Jesus and promote Jesus?

[PowerPoint 11b-Holding back]

2. Is there something holding us back from dying - is that something related to Jesus - or something related to our own selfish needs and wants?

[PowerPoint 11c-die tomorrow]

3. If we were to die tomorrow - would people we know - say we were a great ambassador for Jesus? Yes/No/Maybe

Let's pray