

“Thank God for Purpose”

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First Presbyterian Church Kingwood

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His name's Anthony Kronman. Ever heard of him? If you know someone from Yale, you might have heard of him. But most of us haven't. So why do I bring him up this morning?

Because three years ago, in the fall of 2007, an article appeared in the *Boston Globe*. It was written by Anthony Kronman, a Professor and a former Dean of Yale Law School. The article was headlined, "Why are we here?" And it started out like this.

"In the past few weeks, tens of thousands of young men and women have begun their college careers. They have worked hard to get there. A letter of admission to one of the country's selective colleges or universities has become the most sought-after prize in America.

Students who have won this prize are about to enter an academic environment richer than any they have known. They will find courses devoted to every question under the sun. But there is one question for which most of them will search their catalogs in vain: The question of the meaning of life, of what one should care about and why, of what living is for.

In a shift of historic importance," Professor Kronman wrote, "America's colleges and universities have largely abandoned the idea that life's most important question is an appropriate subject for the classroom. In doing so, they have betrayed their students by depriving them of the chance to explore it in an organized way, before they are caught up in their careers and preoccupied with the urgent business of living itself."

So let me simply ask you this morning. Have you ever thought about it? When was the last time you asked yourself. What's my life really supposed to be about? What's my purpose? Have you ever asked those questions?

You see, I think Professor Kronman's right. I think most of us have a gap in our education exactly at this point; at the point of purpose. For the last century or

so we've been educated better than any other people have in human history. We've been taught how to research, how to solve problems, how to work our way to success in our careers, in whatever field we've chosen. But we've never put much work into the "why" question. Why am I doing this? What's the goal of my life? What's my purpose?

We haven't thought about those questions. We haven't been taught how to do it. And because of that, as Kronman says, we become "caught up in our careers, preoccupied with the urgent business of living" until something reminds us that our lives are meant for more.

It could be something we hear. It could be something that happens to us. It could be just a stray thought that comes into our mind, seemingly from nowhere. But it comes doesn't it. The thought that has that question in it. Why am I here? What's the real purpose of my life.

And whether we realize it or not, the truth is, it's not really a thought that comes from nowhere. It's a thought that comes from God's Spirit at work in our minds. And the reason the Spirit so patiently and persistently puts the question of purpose into our minds is because God wants us to search for the answer. And the answer is found in His word. In fact it's found at the very heart of God's word to us this morning, in Paul's prayer of thanksgiving in Ephesians.

In Ephesians 1, Paul prays out his thanks that God has revealed to us a purpose for our lives. Listen again to what Paul prays. In Christ, he prays "we were chosen." And then Paul goes on to pray thanks for two things. The first is the process that's led to salvation for those in Christ. Paul calls it "the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will."

So God has a purpose. But the question remains. What about us? What about our purpose? Is the purpose of our lives part of God's purpose? Is it part of God's plan to "work out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will?"

And when we ask the question that way, when we use those words we need to notice something. That's not quite the same question. Because now the question is not just about me. It's not just a question about the purpose of my life. Now the question is whether there's a purpose for my life that's bigger than me, bigger than anything I could ever actually envision. Now the question is whether the purpose of my life is somehow linked to God's purpose, to God's

plan for everything. And that's a different question. But of course asking the right question is crucial if you want to find the right answer.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy is a comic science fiction series created in the 1970's. It was made into a movie in 2005. Maybe you saw it. But in case you didn't here are the words the narrator speaks as the movie starts.

"Many millions of years ago, a race of hyper-intelligent, pan-dimensional beings got so fed up with constant bickering about the meaning of life they commissioned two of their brightest scientists to design a stupendous super-computer."

The scene shifts. Two girls, dressed in white stand in front of the computer. It's named, "Deep Thought." One of them says, "O Deep Thought, we want you to tell us the answer." And Deep Thought says, "The answer to what?" "The answer to life, the universe...and everything," the girl says. "Hmm," says Deep Thought, "I'll have to think about that."

The scene changes again. It's much later in the movie now but two girls are once more standing in front of Deep Thought. One of them starts to say, "Deep Thought, do you have..." "An answer for you? I do," says Deep Thought, "but you're not going to like it." "It doesn't matter," the girl says. "Tell us. We must know it."

"All right," Deep Thought says. "The answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything is...42." "42," the girl asks, "are you sure?" "Yes," says Deep Thought. "I considered it thoroughly. It's 42. But it would have been better to know what the real question was."

It's always better to know the real question, isn't it? And when it comes to a question of purpose, the Bible says, it's crucial. If we want to know the purpose of our life, then we need to know that our life is not lived on an island. We are a part of a universe in which everything has been created by God. So if I want to know the purpose of my life, the question I really want to ask is this. How is my life linked to God's purpose? And in Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1, we hear an answer to that question. It's in verse 12. God has called us Paul prays, "in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory."

Now think about those words with me for just a moment, will you? Because they imply, as Rick Warren says, "that my life is meant meant for more than just me." Or as John Ortberg says in the *The Me I Want to Be*; "You are not *your* handiwork; your life is not *your* project. Your life is *God's* project."

So tell me this morning, do you thank God that's true. Do you thank for that often? Do you pray out your thanks that God has given you a purpose for your life that's bigger than you? And after you've prayed out your thanks to God for giving you that purpose, do you do more? Do you seek to live out your thanks for God's purpose in your life by putting that purpose into practice?

God has put together His plan for everything, Paul says, "in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ; in order that we might be for the praise of His glory."

We can be, Paul says, ... you and I, we can be for the praise of God's glory. Or we can live a life made up of our plans, seeking, always seeking for a sense of our real purpose. The decision is ours to make. God will offer us choices, all through our lives. He will offer us choices to use our energy, our lives and our resources; our time, talent and treasure in the service of our own plans for ourselves or His purpose for us. And one of the reasons why we have a stewardship season each fall is to say, "I want my life to be a part of God's purpose for the world."

And if you've ever doubted that what you give is part of God's purpose to unite people everywhere ... if you've ever doubted that through what you give you can watch God work His purpose out for this world; then watch this ...