

We are purposefully adventurous.

Acts 20:17-28 (CGS #4)

INTRODUCTION:

Over the course of September, we have looked at our mission, vision, and values as a church. Last week, we explored our value of radical generosity. We define radical generosity this way, living adventurously to impact my world. Think about that for a second. How many of us would really and truly define our lives as “being on an adventure?” Frankly, I know that I don’t always think of my life that way. Especially when I am just going through the motions of the everyday things – meals, errands, work, bills, taking care of the kids and helping my spouse, and then trying to unwind with what little time is left over. Hardly an adventure, right?

Well... Yes, and no. See, our perspective matters. And as believers, our perspective is to be fixed on eternity in all things and at all times. Let’s listen to Paul on this one.

Here is how Paul describes the chief purpose of his life (Acts 20:24), “But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” Whenever we read the book of Acts and hear of everything Paul went through and the places he traveled, we easily describe his life as an adventure. But in his statement above, which is typically called his life verse, he doesn’t talk about the places or the experiences as giving his life value. Instead, he talks about finishing the race of proclaiming the gospel and having value because of what God has invited him into. It is really remarkable that someone like Paul defines the value, purpose, and adventure of his life in this way. It should also be really encouraging to you and me. We don’t need to be like Paul in the travel and the intensity of his missionary endeavors to live a purposeful adventure with the Lord. Our everyday lives can be and, frankly, are supposed to be a purposeful adventure with and for the Lord. Yes, I know that sounds odd or even unrealistic. Errands, bills, work, the general humdrum of the normal is supposed to be an adventure...? Yep! How is this possible?

In one word, the gospel.

It was the gospel that changed everything for Paul, and it has changed everything for us. It took us from being enemies of God to adopted children of grace. It took us from trying to find purpose and value in anything and everything of this world to having eternal purpose and value in Christ! It took us from trying to eke out everyday existence to becoming everyday missionaries! The reality is that even for Paul there was a lot of downtime between travel and missionary journeys. He spent around three years in Ephesus on one stop alone. There was a lot of “normal” for Paul in those stops, and yet, he describes his life’s chief purpose as testifying to the gospel of grace. He was in every way an everyday missionary. In our own city, there are 26,000 permanent residents who have no measurable connection to a gospel-preaching church. Think about that for a second. That is 72% or 7 out of every 10 permanent residents. These are our neighbors, colleagues, friends, classmates, and family members. Imagine how their lives and our community would be different and more joyful as more people experience the hope and love of Jesus. If the gospel has changed us, then we should see ourselves not just waiting out our time here and now for eternity. We should see ourselves as everyday missionaries and sent ones. As everyday missionaries, we are invited by Jesus to carry the hope of the gospel into every place and space we go. We are called by God to see each person as an eternal being. And we are empowered by the Spirit to live on a purposeful adventure for the glory of God and the good of our neighbors.

GETTING STARTED – As a group, take time to answer this question. How often do you view the people around you as precious eternal beings? What might you need to change for that perspective to become the norm?

IN THE WORD – Let's dig back into the passage(s). It is important to strengthen our muscles in reading God's Word. On Sunday, we walked through the passage in the sermon. Hopefully, that helped you to see the landmarks of the passage with fresh eyes. Now, with your group, go back through it and see what God is saying to you specifically.

First, before you read the passage, take a moment to ask God's Spirit to quiet your mind and heart and to illuminate the text to you. Second, read the passage aloud to the group. Then, follow the simple method below. (O.P.A)

Observe: Make 8-10 observations from the passage. Pay close attention to observe and note repeated words and phrases, names, places, and themes.

Principles: From your list of observations, what patterns or big ideas do you see emerging? Can you distill it down into 2-4 big idea truths?

Apply: Moving from your list of principles, it is time to apply God's Word. Remember, we believe that God's Word is living and active and that it can change the way we live Monday- Friday. What is one tangible way to apply a truth from your list above?

Note: Another way to approach your time together is to talk through the following questions.

1. What stands out to you about Paul's words in this section to the Ephesian elders?
2. What is the most challenging aspect of seeing yourself as an everyday missionary?
3. Are you able to tell your testimony to someone if asked? Take time to tell your story to those in your group by answering these three questions.
 - a. When did you realize that you needed salvation, and what about Jesus convinced you that he was the Savior?
 - b. Who were spiritually influential people in your journey, and how did they help you?
 - c. How is life different for you now as you follow Jesus? I.e., What difference is Jesus making in your life?
4. What is one place or space that you are going to go this week that you can go as an everyday missionary?