

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

Now, that's the only Shakespeare you'll ever probably hear me quote – not just because it is from Macbeth, which is also called the Scottish Play, but also because it is the only Shakespeare I ever read – and only because I had to in English at school.

But it was a quote that really stuck with me when I read it all those years ago. It is a speech made by someone who has come to the conclusion that life just goes on, one day after another, but in the end it doesn't make any difference. It has no significance. No purpose.

And of course Shakespeare wasn't the first person to express this feeling. In the Bible, King Solomon, David's son, expressed something really similar. He wrote in the Book of Ecclesiastes,

<sup>2</sup> “Meaningless! Meaningless!”

says the Teacher.

“Utterly meaningless!

Everything is meaningless.”

<sup>3</sup> What does man gain from all his labour  
at which he toils under the sun?

<sup>4</sup> Generations come and generations go,  
but the earth remains for ever....

<sup>11</sup> There is no remembrance of men of old,  
and even those who are yet to come  
will not be remembered  
by those who follow.

I have seen all the things that are done under the sun;  
all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.” Ecclesiastes 1:2-4, 11, 14

To try to overcome this feeling of emptiness, Solomon described in his book how he went looking for meaning in pleasure, in undertaking great projects, in hard work, in wealth, in wisdom. And he had it all.

- He built an amazing palace and temple for God.
- He had 700 wives and 300 concubines.
- He was the richest and wisest man of his day.

But none of it satisfied his heart. None of it took away the feeling of meaninglessness.

And other people have tried to do the same. In the face of that nagging feeling of the lack of meaning and purpose of life, people have reached for more and more.

For example, Madonna is reportedly the best-selling female recording artist of all time. She's called the Queen of Pop, one of the greatest music artists and songwriters ever.

But despite all of this, this is what she said about herself in an interview with Vanity Fair: “I have an iron will, and all of my will has always been to conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy... I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being and then I get to another stage and think I'm mediocre and uninteresting... My drive in life is from this horrible fear of being mediocre. And that's always pushing me. Because even though I've become Somebody, I still have to prove that I am Somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will.”

So what can we do in the face of this problem? Do our lives have any real purpose?

- Was Shakespeare right in describing life as a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing?

- Was Solomon right in saying that everything is meaningless?
- Was Madonna right in thinking that we have to keep pushing in order to try to become somebody and make our lives matter?

Well, let's see what God says about this. Let's go right back to the beginning and read Genesis 1:26-28: "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God

he created him;

male and female

he created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

### 1. God Created Us

If you bought a tablet today, an Apple iPad or an Android equivalent, you could find many uses for it. You could use it as a doorstop, a chopping board, a plate or name badge, or even as an alternative to bathroom scales.

But it wouldn't work properly, and it would be a waste of its potential. To get the most out of it, you have to use it for what it was designed for, what it was made for.

And it's the same with our lives. There are lots of things that we could do with our 70 or 80 years or whatever we have on this planet - enjoy ourselves, make money, seek popularity, comfort, happiness or entertainment.

But if we want our lives to work, to be all that they can be, then we need to discover what we were designed for. What we were made for. And for this we need to listen to God, because "God created man." Genesis 1:27.

We are not the product of random processes over billions of years. We are the product of God's creativity and power. We have been designed and made by God! As Jesus said: "At the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female'." Mark 10:6

And so if we want the best life, we need to let God determine our purpose, what we are here for.

### 2. To Resemble God

And that is what this passage tells us.

"God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27

We were all made in God's image. We were made to resemble him.

- That doesn't mean we should be identical to him. There are many ways that God is different from us. He alone is all powerful, all-knowing and all-present.
- Neither does it mean we look like him, physically, because God is not a physical being. In the passage we read last week, Jesus said that "God is spirit." John 4:24.

But it means that in many other ways - morally, spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and relationally - we've been made to resemble God. For example, we are morally accountable for our actions. We are called to choose to live in holiness and righteousness to mirror God's holiness. So God said, "Be holy, because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:16

### 3. To Relate to God and to each other

But being made in the image of God also means that we can uniquely relate to God. In Day 5, God blessed the animals he made. But in Day 6, he didn't only bless human beings, he also spoke directly to them: "God blessed them and said to them." Genesis 1:28

As God's image-bearers we were made to listen to God, to communicate with him, to live in relationship with him. This is what life is really all about. In his prayer, Jesus said, "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." John 17:3 That's what our ultimate purpose is. Knowing God personally and intimately!

But we're not only called to relate to God. We're also called to relate to each other in a way that resembles God and his capacity for loving and faithful relationships. "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us." Ephesians 5:1–2

#### 4. To Reproduce God's Image

So we're called to resemble God and relate to him. But we're also called to be like him in reproducing his image. This is the first of two commands in the passage we read: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth." Genesis 1:28

##### a) One Family

It is one of the purposes of marriage, to produce children and also to provide the family in which they would be cared for and nurtured.

And this has been fulfilled as the 7.8 billion people in this world all came from the very first couple. Paul declared in Athens: "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth." Acts 17:26 This means all prejudice and pride over race and ethnicity is pointless. We're all one family!

##### b) Our Mission

But not everyone either wants or is gifted the privilege of having kids. But there is a deeper aspect of this command. Paul was a single man and yet he could call Timothy, "My true son in the faith." 1 Timothy 1:2 He was his spiritual child as he had discipled him in his walk with Christ!

And this is our mission, whatever our life situation. Jesus has called his followers to "Go and make disciples of all nations." Matthew 28:19, to reproduce God's image by pointing people to Jesus and helping them to grow more like him.

#### 5. To Represent God's Rule on Earth

The second command here was not only to fill the earth, but to "Subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:28

That doesn't mean that we have the right to use and abuse this world for our own selfish wants. Neither does it excuse cruelty to animals or a disregard for our impact on the environment. Rather it is the opposite.

As God's image bearers, we've been called to represent God's rule on this earth. To take the responsibility of leadership in this world. To care for this world and its inhabitants, as God cares for it, as "The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving towards all he has made." Psalm 145:17

#### 6. To Reflect God's Glory

And as we do all of this, ultimately we are called to reflect God's glory. We were made to glorify, to declare, to display, to demonstrate how great God really is. That is our ultimate purpose. In Isaiah 43:7 God speaks of "Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

That's why at the end of this chapter, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." Genesis 1:31 At the end of the other days of creation, God said it was good. But here is very good, because God was especially pleased as human beings more clearly reflected his character and glory.

And this should be our greatest ambition and goal. "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31

As God's image bearers we have been given this amazing purpose in life: to resemble God, to relate to God and to others, to reproduce his image, to represent his rule and ultimately to celebrate God's goodness and reflect his glory.

#### 7. Jesus Came to Rescue Us

But if that is the case, why then do we struggle with feeling that our lives are empty and meaningless? Why then do we drive ourselves to seek meaning in possessions, achievements or popularity? If we have been given this purpose, why do we struggle to live it out?

##### a) Our Failure

Well, that's because we have all failed to live up to this great purpose. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23.

We have rebelled against the God who made us and demanded our own way. So:

- We have failed to resemble God in his moral purity.

- Our thinking has become warped and distorted.
- Our attitudes and actions towards each other are so often unloving.
- We have messed up this world.
- And we don't reflect God's glory.

And this feeling of emptiness is a direct consequence of turning our back on God. God said, "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." Jeremiah 2:13

Listen to Brian as he experienced that emptiness, but how Jesus rescued him. [Video: Brian's Story](#)

#### b) Our Salvation

And this is the good news for us. Instead of giving up on us, and allowing us to go our own way, God sent his Son to seek for us. He is the only human being who perfectly fulfilled God's purpose for him. As we read in Hebrews 1:3: "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." Jesus could say that when people saw him, they had seen the Father!

And as the perfect human being, he went to the cross where he bore our sins, our rebellion and shame, and died in our place. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21

And so if we put our faith in Jesus, then we are brought into that personal relationship with God that we were made for. We are given a brand new life. We are made a brand new creation.

#### c) Our Transformation

And then we can rediscover our original design and purpose as the bearers of God's image. "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10

As we follow Jesus and let him lead and guide us, then through the power of the Holy Spirit, he will make us more and more like Christ. We "are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory." 2 Corinthians 3:18

#### d) Our Future

And then one day when Jesus comes back, this process of transformation will be completed because: "When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." 1 John 3:2

Then God's purpose and plan for humanity will be fulfilled. Then we will glorify God perfectly as we will bear his image as his adopted sons and daughters.

#### Conclusion

So Shakespeare, Solomon, Madonna, and many others were not right. Our lives are not insignificant or meaningless. We don't need to drive ourselves to become somebody.

We just need to accept who we are. We've been designed and created for a wonderful purpose. As God's image bearers, we have the awesome privilege

- To resemble God.
- To relate to God and to one another
- To reproduce God's image
- To represent God's rule
- And to reflect God's glory.

And though we've messed this up through our sin, if we trust in Jesus, we can be restored. And so, as we wait for that day when God's purpose in our lives will be perfectly fulfilled, we can live each day in relationship with God and for the glory of God.

Andrew Burt  
Enniscorthy Christian Fellowship  
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