

Ger-11 the Eternal Purpose of the Church

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon emphasizes the church's eternal purpose and the necessity of suffering to demonstrate God's wisdom in the world.

Duration: 1:13:32

Scripture: Ephesians 1:9

Topics: "Eternal Purpose"

Description

In this sermon, Arthur Katz speaks about the importance of seeing the invisible and embracing a different perspective. He emphasizes that as apostles and prophets, they are a spectacle to the world and the powers that prevail over it. Katz highlights the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus, which is to demonstrate His glory through the church to the principalities and powers of the earth. He challenges the listeners to align themselves with the word of God and to value the church as the masterpiece of God, even though it may seem fragile and ordinary compared to the grandeur of the world.

Transcript

This lecture is dedicated to the topic of prince-tombs and violence. Dear listeners, it is Arthur Katz who is speaking about the topic of prince-tombs and violence. You are listening to a recording of October 3rd, 1989.

Good evening, children. Good evening, children. You didn't know that I was fluent in German, eh? You didn't know that I was fluent in German, eh? I am in a strange mood and disposition tonight.

And I believe that this is all for your sake. It would be best if we could describe it as if I were dead. Without inspiration, I can't describe to you the strangeness of the mood and the sensation.

I know you won't believe it, so I won't take pains to explain it. But I am right to this moment without any understanding of how to proceed further. But I know you won't believe it, so I won't take pains to explain it.

We apostles and prophets are a spectacle to the world and to the powers that prevail over the world. That if anything triumphant is to take place in God, it will take place on the basis of His resurrection, power and life. Through those who have joined Him in His death.

Not only once and for all, but day by day and moment by moment. Even now. It's our prophetic privilege not only to bring the Word of God, but to demonstrate it.

So Lord, have your altogether perfect way. We're willing to taste death, that your life might go forth to this people and through them and beyond them to a dying world, dying city. Come and demonstrate the reality of the power of your resurrection.

Bring us into that realm. Into the eternal realm. Now.

We bless you and give you the praise and the glory and the honor. In Jesus name. Amen.

I might be dead. But I have such a love for you. That still palpitates.

Even in my death. And I'm curious to observe that there's a different configuration of souls every night. Some of you have been here from the beginning.

But there are new ones every night. So it's hard to encapsulate what has already taken place. But one thing I know that God is not wanting an academic presentation on the principalities and the powers of the air.

Though I thought to bring it. But Gary and I have a very distinct impression that God has a different kind of purpose. That the need here is not so much for instruction as for change.

That your needs are of a greater priority than the dissemination of this kind of understanding. So we will only give to the principalities and powers a very minimal acknowledgement. Sufficient to raise the issues of the faith.

And the reality of it into which God would bring us. That indeed we might wrestle against them. But just to repeat a key verse.

If you've not been here before, it's Ephesians 3.10. Well, it begins with 9 and 10. Read that verse. And this is the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus.

I never stagger always in reading these statements in Ephesians to sense the unusual rhetoric that Paul employs. It's as if language is stretched to its ultimate capacity. To enumerate such realities as this.

Language cannot contain it. Our tendency is just to gloss over it. We enjoy the flow of the words and the inspired sense of them.

But we don't really seriously determine to grasp the content. That this is a mystery. Given from the beginning.

By the God who created all things. In order that through the church. A certain demonstration might be made of an eternal kind.

To the principalities and powers of the air. Whatever and whoever they are. Through the church.

It makes no sense to us. It has nothing to do with our immediate purpose or our benefit as Christians. It has not even to do with the issues of the world and of our present age.

It seems utterly remote and transcendent. Even threatens to be irrelevant. That we can safely ignore this.

And consider it again after we die and are in the eternal realm. I can't think of a more tragic response. That the whole nature of the church.

The paradox of the faith. That gives the church its power and its credibility. In the earth and in time now.

Has everything to do with embracing its eternal purpose. Though the demonstration is eternal and in the heavenlies. The character of the church which will manifest the wisdom of God.

Needs to be developed and established now. And what is its essential character? Which has been lost to us since apostolic times. That it is a phenomenon or institution in time.

That is occupied with eternal purposes. Ultimate purposes. You would think that this would be a formula for insanity or irrelevancy.

And yet I commend to you the author of these statements, Paul himself. Who was the epitome of apostolic sanity. And was an ultimately relevant practical man in earth and in time.

All the more because he saw and embraced the eternal purposes. But what does the world say? Oh, you're so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good. Have you heard that one? Of course, it's an uttermost lie.

And standing the truth on its head. And we need to confront that lie. With this reply.

Accept that you're heavenly minded, you're no earthly good. Heaven, more heaven. Is the cry and the need of the earth and the nations now.

And the great need for the people on earth today. So what is the ultimate eternal purpose of God through the church? For which reason he has created all things. I'm waiting for a lightning bolt to come out of heaven and strike me.

That I should take such words to my mouth and speak them so hurriedly and glibly. That God has created all things. The whole panoply of civilization, nations, life, rhythm, nature, production.

All of it. Merely to provide a platform for the church. May we esteem that church as much as he does.

The masterpiece of God. To the praise of his eternal glory. That he did not think it extravagant to create all things for it.

And how intimidated you are by the all things. The apparatus of civilization. Its skyscrapers and great buildings.

Its corporations and business organizations. Its institutions of culture and education. And how little impressed you are with the church.

So fragile. So homely. So ordinary.

So undistinguished. So eclipsed by the grandeur and the magnificence of the world. Its time to align ourselves with the word of God.

And because we have not, we have treated the church as a secondary thing. A Sunday phenomenon. A midweek bible study perhaps.

One might even come to a seminar on a weekday. Big sports. Big sport.

Because we think that our job, our career, our health, our body, our family. That these are the primary and foremost things. How we have bought the lie.

And allowed the world to define for us what the church is. A polite supplement to the world. But not something to be taken seriously.

Let alone to be considered foremost. And the whole purpose for creation. And the fulfilling of an eternal purpose in God.

That has not to do with our immediate need. Dear children. If you could understand this.

You would recognize the genius and the wisdom of God. Who gives us an eternal purpose. Beyond any capacity in ourselves to fulfill.

That saves us from ourselves. And being centered in our own needs. I get so sick in my gut when I hear the familiar phrase.

And what are the needs of the church today? How many in the congregation have a need tonight? Come up and let us pray for your need. My God, it's sick. And we will continue to have needs.

Until we become occupied with His. The ultimate and eternal purpose of God. Come on, let's be honest.

Such words sound to us impractical. Irrelevant. Certainly beyond our ability.

Therefore we can dismiss them. But I want to say tonight that the only one who will take this seriously. To give themselves that an eternal purpose of God be fulfilled.

Are the lovers of God. Who yearn for His gratification. I'll teach you a nice word in Yiddish.

I think it's Hebrew also. They desire God to have nachas. That's what my Jewish mother always wanted from me.

And so rarely got it. It means the deepest satisfaction. The deepest gratification of heart.

This does not commend itself to our rational understanding. What is the means by which God is to obtain this? That there be a demonstration through the church. Of the manifold wisdom of God.

To the whole invisible demonic spirit realm. That presently prevails over the nations. We would need another week and ten days just to begin to scratch this.

But to take up this purpose. To consider it our mandate. However inadequately we presently understand it.

This much is evident. That it cannot be fulfilled by individual virtuosos. It's clearly the task of the whole church or not at all.

A church that is really church. That does not occupy itself with its own needs and its benefits. If we could come to that alone.

We would be already demonstrating another wisdom. Contrary to the wisdom of this world. Which is egocentric in its deepest nature.

Take care of number one. Nobody else will. How many times have you been told that? Even by other Christians.

And agreed with it. Because it is so self-evidently true. So reasonable.

You don't take care of number one. Who will? It's the law of life. According to the wisdom of the world.

Self-preservation. Self-interest. Self itself.

But a people who will live for another. And what is more, die for another. And die in such a way.

As to manifest another wisdom. This is what God is after. But we are presently rooted in time.

In the things that are visible and immediate and practical. What is needed is the triumph of the unseen and the invisible. In a word, apostolic seeing.

Paul did not look on the things which are seen. The things which are temporal. Visible.

But he saw the things that were invisible and eternal. The eternal weight of glory. That made his present afflictions both momentary and light.

This may be the most practical thing of which you have ever been reminded. Because if you are going to take the mandate of God seriously. To be this kind of church that can make this kind of demonstration.

Be assured of this. You will experience affliction. The very absence of that affliction and persecution and oppression.

Is the testimony that we have not taken up God's eternal purpose. Be assured when you will, it will come. You will join those who came before you.

Of whom the world was not worthy. Whose places of persecution and martyrdom we will be visiting tomorrow. And may actually be sharing.

In the not too distant future. When they will tie our hands behind our backs and cast us into the Limmat River. With our own hands.

With the cry that we are not fit to live. Because we are so offensive in what we represent. So much as to threaten even the stability of society.

And religion itself. How do you see the things that are invisible. And eternal.

By which means your present affliction is made both momentary and light. Isn't this God's apostolic answer to last night's theme of pain and suffering. We are going to have to forfeit one kind of seeing if we are going to embrace another.

Which is no light and easy thing to do. I itched to look into the jewelry windows and see an Omega watch. The ultimate masterpiece of watchmaking.

Just to look upon it and contemplate it. Let alone to wear one. To feel the heft and the weight of it.

The supreme excellence of it. And so it goes with all of the things of the world. It takes a wrenching away, not a look.

A painful self-denial. Because we are told that it is legitimate to contemplate such things. And indeed it is not inherently sinful in itself.

All it does is bring us down into the earth. Into things. Into the world.

And it eclipses the things that are invisible and eternal. Are you following me, kinder? To see apostolically is to suffer to see that way. Our eyeballs are trained to dwell on opulence and sensuality.

We need to declare a fast even on the things that we allow ourselves to see. Praise God for our calling. To eternal things.

Which alone has the power to break the bondage of the things that are visible and earthly. We have a task tonight and in these days. And the whole destiny of the church rests upon it.

In our ability to convert the rhetoric of the book of Ephesians into that which is actuality. What a task. Not to be content with the mere verbal acknowledgement.

But to come into the actuality of the things spoken. At the very time when the powers of the air want us to regard the things that are earthly and seen as being ultimate in themselves. Money, fame, security, rings.

To give them a value beyond God's intention. That they should be exalted beyond measure. And that they should be for us a kind of ultimate thing.

To have an Omega watch. A Mercedes Benz. A comfortable retirement.

Fame or renown. To take the things that God intends to be as relative and limited. And to become for us something ultimate.

That we would give them an undue attention, respect and even a worship. As the gods of this world. No wonder that we're fearful and insecure and intimidated.

Because we have been seduced to worship what God has only intended to be as something relative. Because we have been seduced to worship what God has only intended to be as something relevant. False gods that need to be unmasked.

And by such an unmasking be defeated. When the church can persuade all of the victims of those powers that these are deceptions, illusions and lies. Not because we verbally tell them, but because we demonstrate it in the reality of our life.

A life that is free from the influence of the powers is not insecure or threatened or fearful. Does not lust after things. Has been restored to the correct priority to which God gives them.

Has brought eternity into its rightful place of consideration. Not as a concept or as a verbal thing, but as a reality. Already in the stratum of eternity while we are yet in time.

Tell me how we can go from where we presently are to that definition of church without suffering. Are we willing for it? That he might have nachas. Not only in this age, but in the ages to come.

By a church that once walked according to the spirit of the powers of the air. That now works in the disobedient sons in the earth. Who were sanctified by his power.

Utterly redeemed out of the earth. Brought into a heavenly citizenship even while in the world. That demonstration is to the eternal praise of his glory.

Are we yielding to it? Welcoming the disciplines of God by which it is to be obtained. Desiring to be exhorted and to be addressed and spoken to in love. Needing and welcoming the exhortations that come to us daily from others in the body.

That we might be brought to such a place. Willing to have our privacy invaded. And our convenience ended.

To be a church that is earnest and real. That needs each other. And will avail themselves of each other.

In the way that God has intended. That we might be the demonstration for which he waits. If you'll give yourself to this.

You'll find that the church is a place of suffering before it's a place of glory. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 1. Just as we quickly move through some of these precious verses. Where Paul prays in verse 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The father of glory may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him. Where Paul prays in verse 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. The father of glory may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know what is the hope of his calling. What is the richest of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Maybe this has now a different ring in the light of what has already been said tonight.

Something that pertains to him. It's the issue of his calling. His inheritance.

His purpose. Something that is patently impossible to us. It is so heavenly, so eternal.

Therefore what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe. According to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. And set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

Far above all. I'm stopping right in the middle of a phrase. Far above all.

That's where the resurrection will bring the dead. Not only him but us. We're going to confront the principalities and the powers of the air.

Only by the exceeding greatness of his power toward us. Which was wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. And will work in us when he raises us from the dead.

That we might also occupy the heavenly places. Far above all. Principality and power and might and dominion.

Every name that is named. Not only in this world. But in the ages to come.

And if it will not be explicitly and clearly for the ages to come. Neither will it be valid in this age. You cannot separate the two.

It's the seamless garment of Christ. Seamless. The ages to come and this present age.

If we are invalid for the one, we are invalid for the other. We need to get those earthly concepts out of our minds. These tiny little categories.

First this, then that. First this age, then the ages to come. We'd be much wiser to embrace the ages to come.

And then we will demonstrate that power in this age as well. The whole issue is the issue of resurrection. Whether we will be satisfied with it as a correct doctrine of the faith.

Or insist upon it as the supreme reality of our own life. Because only from that power and from that place can we be above all. Principality and power.

All name that is named. If we have hope in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. Their children hear the cry of God.

We have allowed the world and the church to trivialize the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have been satisfied with it as a category. A doctrine.

And have not understood that God calls us to the appropriation of that power. Or we will be of all men most to be pitied. If you want, you can turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15.

Where Paul upbraids the church. Verse 12. How does someone among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? And if I could take this liberty tonight, I would paraphrase this.

You say, brother, when did we ever say that there is no resurrection from the dead? It's not what we have said with our mouths. It's what we have demonstrated with our lives. Our lives have testified to the world that there is no resurrection from the dead.

Because they have not seen that supreme power in us. Who are unwilling to taste of his death. And insist on living on the basis of our own power and ability.

And indeed have seen to it that our present Christianity is sufficiently timid and undemanding that it does not require more. But take seriously the eternal purposes of God for the church. And you will cry out for perhaps the first time, who is sufficient for this church? Because if we are not living in the power of the resurrection and demonstrating that power, then what we are saying to the world is that Christ is not risen.

And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain. It might be correct preaching, doctrinally sound and biblical. But if it's not in the power of resurrection, it's vain.

Oh brother, you are going too far now. It will still be interesting for us. It will still be edifying.

Perhaps. But it's vain in terms of the eternal purposes of God. That's why I had to come up tonight as one dead.

That's why it was pointless for me to try and prepare myself today. All we could do was go out and take a walk. It was pointless to look at my papers.

Full of treasure though they are. God was wanting to do something tonight more than say something. But to demonstrate.

To encourage your faith. To lay hold of the resurrection from the dead. And be willing for the deaths to which he will bring us.

But I know you Swiss. You are too Jewish. And want to succeed on the basis of your own ability.

And want to succeed on the basis of your own ability. Your own cleverness. You are too clever.

Too able. Too competent. All the world knows your reputation.

Or there'd be no such thing as an Omega Watch. To get you to leave that basis for living. To die to it.

And to be weak. And to trust for the resurrection and the life of God through you. In critical moments.

When life and death issues are at stake. When eternity is at stake. That is the faith.

We have trivialized the resurrection. And we are living beneath it. And we've allowed the world to make an Easter Bunny over it.

You say, but brother, how often are the issues life and death and eternity? Always. If you can see apostolically. From the perspective of God, is there such a thing as a small thing? Well, this is only a meeting, brother.

It may be for you. And that's all you'll take from it. But I believe that in God's sight, this is an eternal moment.

A once and for all thing that shall not be given again. The spirit of God speaking to the church. Even into the earth.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. For the Lord has spoken. Can that ever be considered a small thing? If there's so much as one person in this room tonight.

Whose life shall be radically turned for God. And liberated by the word to be his revolutionary. Even to assure their martyrdom.

Even so much as to assure their martyrdom. Who can measure the consequence of that? Either in time or eternity. When are we going to begin to see apostolically? That in God's sight, there's no thing small.

May we repent on our faces tonight. That sees Christianity as a succession of meetings. And comes with the lowest of expectations.

And does not expect God. Or that the word that comes should constitute an event. I'm afraid that we have said to many, there's no resurrection.

I'm afraid that we have said to many, there's no resurrection. That has made our preaching vain and our faith vain. And we are found to be false witnesses.

That the dead do not rise, that Christ is not risen. This is the issue. This is the power.

The enablement. To be the kind of people for which God is waiting. Who calls us to heavenly places.

Above all principality and power. The God who has raised us up together. And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Verse 6, chapter 2. If there's no resurrection. How could he have raised us up together to sit with him in heavenly places? Because it's in that stratum that the action is. Do you remember Jesus with Nicodemus? Who spoke of himself as the son of man who has... No man has come down from heaven who has not first ascended up to heaven.

Even the son of man who is in heaven. The son of man was standing on a piece of earth in Jerusalem. And yet describes himself at that same moment presently as being in heaven.

Is that a formula for insanity? Is it a place that we also might occupy? That itself is ultimate reality and sanity. That we can be seated in heavenly places. While we're yet in the earth.

And from that place have power over all. For we are of all men most to be pitied. And let's shut our Bibles and go home or go out for a bash.

This is even true. The book of Ephesians is not some kind of rhetorical fight of fancy. And then we need to come into the reality of what's described.

And from that place combat the powers of the air that tyrannize man. And by that same confrontation come to that ultimate maturity that fits us for eternity. Are you in the heavenly place tonight? Or only in Zurich? And if you're not in the heavenly place.

Why not? Where is your resurrection faith? How shall you experience the power of the ages to come? For in Hebrews it says, by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified. Chapter 10, verse 14. Verse 14.

By one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified. By one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified. What a glorious verse.

It deserves weeks of attention and contemplation. For by that one offering he has opened up to us a new and a living way. That we might have a boldness in verse 19 to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

Here's where I really risk losing you. This stretches your faith unbearably to breaking. You were pretty much with me till now.

Yes, agreeing about the necessity for the resurrection life as power. Yeah, that we might even be seated in heavenly places by faith together with Jesus. But that there's yet a further entry.

But that there's yet a further entry. That really explains what being seated in that place means. That we are invited into the holiest place of all.

The inner sanctuary of God. Where only the high priest in Levitical times could come once in the year. And God forbid he should come in unsanctified.

And the Israel that was waiting outside should not hear the bells of his garment tingling. To go from the outer court to the holy place and then even beyond that through a veil into the holy place. The final and ultimate, notice the word, holiest place of all.

And there to sprinkle the blood of sacrifice on the mercy seat. For the whole of the people Israel. The sublime and the eternal requirement of God.

In the unspeakably holiest place of all. Between the wings of the cherubim. Where the very Shekinah presence of God is.

This is now the ultimate test of your faith. Everything of your Christian life was till now. That God has made for us a new and living way through the blood of Jesus.

And invites us with a boldness to enter into the holiest place of all. This is the heavenly place. There is the inspiration and the power above all.

Verse 22, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith. Have you ever entered that place? We have come to the final impasse. We're either going to go only so far.

In our charismatic and evangelical intention. From which we can never fulfill the eternal purpose of God. Nor obtain the power to wrestle effectually against them.

And God never intended that we should from a lesser place. But calls us to enter. Where only the high priest was previously allowed in the earthly tabernacle.

He invites us tonight. To the holiest place of all. Within the veil.

Which is above all. Principality and powers. And every name that can be named.

From that place to live and to have our being. For the just shall live by their faith. But brother, I'm not qualified.

I'm not too priestly. It doesn't say by your qualification. It says by his blood.

By which he has perfected forever them that are sanctified. In verse 14 of chapter 10. We have trivialized the resurrection.

We have minimized the church. We have made the blood of Jesus a commonplace. We have not seen the things that are invisible.

God calls us to open our eyes. He's giving an apostolic and prophetic call. To the remnant church within the church.

In the city of apostolic martyrdom. And sacrifice. Who even tonight are about us as an invisible cloud of witnesses.

Waiting and expectant. Not complete nor made perfect without us. Have you entered by faith? Into the holiest place of all.

That you might be seated with him in heavenly places. Above all. Principality and power.

And every name that can be named. Dear children, if this is only a fanciful rhetoric. And not an actual real entry.

If God is toying with us and mocking us. And speaking only fancifully. And that this is not a reality that we can live from and experience.

We of all men are most to be pitied. We can forget any presumption to take to our hearts the eternal purpose of God. Because it's only from this place that the power for it is to be had.

He's made a way. A new and living way. And few there be that call themselves Christians who have ever found it.

He rent the veil by his own flesh. And came in before the Shekinah presence of the Father. By his own blood.

Once and for all. Faith is an act. I would have much preferred to have given you beautiful lectures on the complex subject of the principalities and powers of the earth.

But there's a much more profound requirement now. To come into this place in God. The only place by which they can be defeated.

By a people who are occupying that place. Seated in heavenly places. Raised up together in the power of resurrection with him.

Together. And from that place fulfilling the eternal destiny of the church. My own faith is stretched to breaking tonight.

To believe that you could have faith for this. The faith that enters. And holds fast the confession of this faith.

Without wavering. Even when you look at the omniscience. Even when you look at an omega watch.

It will not appear the same. So I want to give you an invitation tonight. It's really his invitation.

If you've never entered. He invites you to draw near. And to come even with boldness.

Not with arrogance. As if you were qualified. But because you esteem the blood of the lamb.

As the father himself esteems that blood. That it has opened a way for us all. So I want you to bow your heads before God.

And ask for the faith which is from God. Not of yourself lest any man boast. This is a supreme faith.

For an ultimate place in God. That there might be a fulfillment of the ultimate and eternal purposes. For which reason he has created all things.

And this is the eternal purpose of God. Precious God. In Jesus' name.

In the name of him who made a new and living way for us. Grant us the grace. The faith.

The desire. To enter and to occupy that place. That you have made possible once and for all.

Forgive us for living from a lesser place. With a lesser Christianity. That was only occupied with our need.

Our satisfaction. But not yours. Scripture says hold fast the confession of your faith.

How shall you hold fast what you have never confessed? And I ask you to do it now. In this once and for all time that the Lord has given. In the eternal now.

One by one. Sitting, standing, kneeling. Confessing.

Heavenly Father by the blood of Jesus. And not my own qualification. I now do enter.

Within the veil. Into the holiest place of all. And there to abide.

From there to live and move and have my being. To draw power and inspiration. To fulfill your eternal purpose.

From within the veil. This will unfit you for the world. If you make this confession tonight.

Within 24 hours you'll be an offense to men. They will not be able to understand or identify what has happened. But you will be a new savor of life unto life for some.

And death unto death for others. For you will be breathing the very reality of eternity upon men. While you're in time.

Do you have the desire? The faith. To enter. Make a confession of such a faith.

And hold it fast. So the enemy would seek to steal it from you. From this night forth.

I'm going to sing and then I'm going to sit down. Klaus will translate the lyric. Within the veil.

I now do come. Into the holy place. To look upon your face.

I see such beauty there. None other can compare. I come to you, O Lord.

Within the veil. As I'm singing, come. Within the veil.

I now do come. Faith is an act. Get out of your seat, go on your knees, come forward.

Into the holy place. To look upon your face. I see such beauty there.

None other can compare. We worship you, O Lord. Serve you also.

From within the veil. You can hum it with me in the spirit. Dear listeners, Arthur Katz spoke about princes, tyrants and violence.

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