

Making Sense of Your Life

by Francis Chan

Francis Chan encourages believers to evaluate their lives in light of the gospel and live with purpose and urgency, reflecting God's love and truth.

Duration: 25:20

Scripture: Philippians 1:27

Topics: "Personal Redemption", "Gospel Living"

Description

This sermon reflects on the speaker's emotional return to a familiar congregation, sharing personal updates on his walk with the Lord, experiences of answered prayers, and reflections on God's love and redemption throughout history. The sermon emphasizes living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ, aligning one's actions with their beliefs, and the importance of making life choices that reflect the truth of the gospel.

Transcript

All right, it is really cool to be back. I had no idea how emotional I was going to get during worship. You know, I've been speaking everywhere, but there's something about coming into this room.

Hey, how's it going? And just remembering everything that took place in this room, and many of your lives where you gave your life to the Lord, and some of you that I baptized in that, whatever you call it. It's just so much just came flooding back, and there's just something about this place. I miss it so much.

I miss you so much. I talk to people, and I forget how unique this congregation is. As I speak in other places, and I deal with issues in other churches, and I just keep pointing back to Cornerstone.

I go, man, no, the elders there, here's what they do. And they're like, what, really? I go, no, really. Isn't everyone like this? No, you know, and just to come back in the room, and just the sense, the spirit in the room, and the worship.

It's just, I can't even explain what it feels like. I didn't even realize how long I'd been gone. You know, I know I spoke by video, and I've done little things, but I haven't preached in here since last May.

And so it's just kind of overwhelming to just come and see everyone's faces, and it's so good to see your faces again. I don't even know where to start. It's like everything I planned just kind of went out the window, as usual.

I guess I'll just kind of give a little bit of an update, starting with just my own walk with the Lord. It's just been amazing. I feel so, I'm just so loved by God.

It blows my mind sometimes. These last few months, the things I pray for, it's always been this thing where I pray, and then God answers, and you're like, wow, you know, and again, and again, and again. Like, I'm just seeing the supernatural all of the time.

But it's even gotten beyond that lately. It feels like God now answers prayers that I didn't even pray. You know, like, well, if I thought to pray that, I would have prayed that, but I didn't even pray that, and you still answered it.

It's almost like you almost feel like a kid who's asking Dad for these things, and then Dad just spoils you and says, okay, you can have that, you can have that. And by the way, you didn't even ask for this, but I went and bought you this while you were gone. I feel like this spoiled kid before the Lord.

Like, God, are you kidding me? You know, it just seems like on a daily basis, I'm just in awe of God, and as I'm reading his word, I just feel more loved by Jesus than ever. When I read this book, and I feel like I understand the gospel in an even greater way, and you know, from Genesis all the way to Revelation, I'm going, God, look at how much you love the world. Look at how much you, you know, you just want the best for Adam and Eve.

You just want the best for them, and they went their own way, and you went after them, and you know, and then what you did with Noah, and just saying, you know, I'm going to start over, man. I'm going to just start over, and this family, and just over and over, all through the judges, and over the kings. It's like everyone wandering away from God, and there's just this awesome being up there that just keeps bringing everyone back, bringing everyone back, and then finally culminating in Jesus himself.

Saying, I'm going to redeem this place, I'm going to redeem this world, and just to go, God, why would you do that? And then in everyday life, just even silly things, where you go, Lord, why do you even care about that? Why do you care about this? Why are you so good? Even a couple months ago, I'm in my bed, and I'm praying, and I got to the point where I couldn't even sleep. I was so excited to be in love with God. You know, it's like I remember when I first started dating my wife.

You know, when you first fall in love, and then it gets old, but, you know, I'm kidding, I'm kidding, but it's different. It's just different. It's deeper, it's richer.

But you know how that initial giddiness, like, I can't believe she's going out with me, and you just can't even sleep. That's the way I've been feeling with God lately. Like, I can't believe you love me.

You know, it's where I'm waking up in the middle of the night going, the God of the universe? Where, you know, one night I couldn't sleep, and so I just started counting breaths. Like, every time I would breathe in, as I would exhale, I'd go, God, thank you for giving me that breath, because every, you know, it says you alone are immortal. You're the only one that gives life.

Thank you for that one. You know, and just to be communicating with the one that gives me every single breath and saying, God, you've got to be kidding me, and then to think that you know me, and you love me, and the way you're answering my prayers. I'm just stunned.

I'm just amazed by this God all over again, and it's just been great, and I hope the same is true for you, because that's what I pray for you. Oh, God, I guess I'm apart from these people now. And for those who don't know me, I just realized a lot of you don't even know who I am, because you came up.

My name is Francis, and I used to be a pastor here for a little while, like 16 years, but it's just been so good. Family's doing really well. Last time I was here in May, I announced that Lisa was pregnant, and sadly, it was like a week or two later that we had a miscarriage.

But then it was a week or two later, she got pregnant again, and so we're due in May with our fourth girl. Don't clap for that. I'm kidding.

No, it's great. It's great. I like girls.

I just feel bad for my son. But I'm cool with it. I love my girls.

What else? We're in the process. We're trying to figure out this adoption with a kid out in China also. There's a kid out there.

I'm praying for that, for our family. He's special needs. He's paralyzed, waist down, and it just doesn't seem like the future's looking too bright for him out there.

And so we're trying to work some things out there. Two weeks ago, we moved to San Francisco. So that's where we've landed at this point.

I just really believe the Lord's called me out there. I can't explain everything. As you know, it's not exactly a church area, San Francisco.

It's not really known for its Christianity. But I kind of wanted to be in a place where I just would have to depend on God for anything good to happen, which is true of everywhere, but it seems extreme there. But also, that's where my mom lives, and I haven't done a great job with being a son and honoring her.

My older brother's been taking care of her and helping her out. And I talked to some of you. Some of you take care of your parents, and you tell me about how your siblings don't help out.

I'm always like, yeah, what a jerk. You know, it's all on you. And I never really thought, well, that's what I do, huh? And so it's kind of good to not be a hypocrite there.

Helping my brother out in San Francisco and working with him. He works with the inner city and people in recovery and trains them to be pastors and working with some inner city pastors and just discipling some guys now out there and really just loving it. The transition's been amazing for all the kids.

All jumped back into public schools, and here they are in a foreign environment. Totally different, but everyone just... It's like first day of school, second day of school, and they're in. It's different, completely different neighborhood.

My kids are considered the white kids. Seriously, everyone is Asian. They're all Chinese, Filipino.

So Lisa stands out like a sore thumb. Like, now you know how I felt and see me. Okay.

But it's good. Yeah, it's just... I'm very confident that it's where the Lord has me right now. And he shows me signs every day and has things work out in crazy ways.

Because there are days when I just... I hurt. I miss this so much. This was my life in so many ways.

But now that I'm in San Francisco, my hope is I can come back here pretty regularly and just keep sharing what God's doing in my life, keep giving you updates on what God's doing in the ministry up there. You know, I think about you guys a lot. And so I think that's why it's kind of overwhelming to see your faces, because I'll pray for you.

And some of you, I don't even know your names, but I picture your faces. And I go, oh, that lady. You know what I'm talking about.

And just, you know, her and him. That one that always sat in the back. I couldn't tell if he was for real.

You know what, whatever. You know who I'm talking about. This and that.

And I sometimes wonder. I go, oh, I wonder what's going on in his life or her life. And every once in a while, I'll get an update from someone and hear good reports or sad reports, because life just changes.

And then about a week ago, I saw this YouTube video from a guy in our church that moved. I don't know if you guys remember Dennis, who used to do the donuts every Sunday morning. And he hasn't been here.

He moved to Alabama, and I just recently saw this YouTube video that he made for his church out there and ended up emailing and reconnecting with him. But I wanted you guys to watch just the first, like, two and a half minutes of it. So we're going to show that on the screen, because it just... My name is Dennis Guglielmetti.

I was diagnosed with ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease in January of 2009. ALS is a motor neuron disease, which causes the nerve cells in muscles to die. This leads to total paralysis and eventually death.

My form of the disease is called bulbar ALS, affecting speech and swallowing first. Eventually it will affect all muscle groups. Life expectancy is two to five years after diagnosis.

I first noticed a mild quivering in my upper lip in the summer of 2008, and my speech began to slur by October. Now my speech is too difficult to understand, and I use electronic means to communicate. It took a year, but the deterioration of my speech eventually caused me to retire from my job in California.

I was the Senior Vice President of Learning and Organization Development for a \$53 billion developer, the largest in the world. I had always planned to retire in Alabama, but never anticipated that it would be so soon. Instead of visiting my family for Christmas, I moved here having abruptly given up my career, friends and church.

It may sound weird to some, but Jesus has put a peace in my heart being faced with this fatal diagnosis. As Christians we all face adversity. It would be easy to give up.

However, I believe Jesus has given me opportunities to witness to others because of my illness. Don't think I don't have thoughts of, why me? Why now? Let this cup pass, but regardless of these thoughts, I am reminded that things happen in Jesus' perfect timing. We embrace death as Christians, not accept it.

Death is a gift, because we get to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus. As Paul said, For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. It brings joy to God, when we remain absolutely confident in Him, no matter what we are facing.

I remember, you know, because I walk through the lobby, obviously every Sunday morning, and I remember that first Sunday, he just said, I don't know what's happening, I don't know. You know, my speech is starting to slur, and no one understands it. I've been to doctors, and each week it would get worse and worse, and I didn't really know what happened.

And then I see that video, and I go, wow. It was just weird to me, again, it reminded me, and when I saw that, and I was able to email him, and see how his faith in Jesus was, and to see his joy still, and his confidence, you go, okay, gosh, that's just what I want. Because everything just changes overnight, you know what I mean? It's like, one day everything's fine, the next Sunday I go to get my little coffee and donut, and suddenly he's talking a little funny, and he goes, yeah, I don't know, I don't know if I got the flu, or something like that, and pretty soon it's just like, okay, it's over.

It's, we don't know what's left, and so let's deal with it now, let's finish it up now. And it's so good to see that video online, and go, you know what, praise God you're using this for his glory. And praise God that you're facing death, and like you said, you embrace it.

Like, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain, and you get it, and I just, it was awesome. There's part of me where I thought, gosh, why didn't I spend more time with that guy? You know, why didn't I, I'd get a quick update, but I'd always be rushing in here, say hi to everyone else, and you think, man, why didn't I just spend five minutes each Sunday? That's it, you know, and just really get the down low on what's going on, and maybe he would have explained all that, or maybe he told me, but I was just so rushing through, and I just emailed him and apologized, and just kept thinking, man, why don't I just, why didn't you just spend five minutes? You know, just regrets and stuff like that, but then my mind started thinking, and I started calculating, what if I gave everyone five minutes a week, and I realized that's not enough time. Like, even if I didn't sleep or eat, it would take a week and a half.

I just mathematically figured that out the other night, and I thought, okay, so it's just, if I gave everyone five minutes, it would take ten days without sleeping or eating or talking to anyone else or doing anything else, just if you were curious. But it was, you know, it was a sense of sadness, there was a sense of joy, but life just changes, and as I prayed for you guys, it's the same prayer, it seems like, from the start. I just pray that your life would make sense in light of eternity.

I think the first illustration I ever did was that goofy rope with the little red part on it, and talking about how your life is a vapor, and here's this tiny little part of our time on Earth, and then these miles of eternity, and we're so consumed with this little red part, and so worried about the very edge, and what's our retirement going to be like, and forgetting about the millions of years afterwards. The passage I want us to look at today is Philippians 1, verse 27 and 28. It says this, whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Then whether I come and see you, or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel, without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved, and that from God. Will you just pray with me for a moment? Father, may we walk out of this room amazed by you, and you alone, amazed by your gospel, in love with Jesus all over again.

Even now, God, may it be about you. Not the novelty of someone coming home, or whatever else. Everything's got to be about you.

Just knowing you. I pray for those in this room who don't really know you. I pray for those who think they know you, but really don't have a clue.

Father, may you show them how good you are. May you open their eyes to the beauty of your gospel. And Father, for those who love you and know you, may they just be so encouraged, and just even love you more when we're done today.

Amaze us with your word, with your power, the power of the word, and how it's just going to cut through our souls. Amaze us with your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name.

Amen. So he says, whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. That's the main phrase I want to focus on.

It's like he wants our lives to be worthy of the gospel of Christ. It's something I'm constantly evaluating in my life. I'm looking at the gospel.

I'm looking at this book, the good news about God, our creator, the one that woke you up this morning, the one that got you in this room, the one that's allowing you to take your next breath, that God and his love for you, and everything he wants for you, and he just wants to shepherd you. He just wants to be your father, and you to be his kid, his child. Just listen to him.

It's for your good, and he keeps sacrificing and giving to woo you to him. He warns you of what it would be like apart from him. He does everything to draw you to himself.

Here's almighty God, the only creature that really matters, and the only being with any true power, life in himself, who's in charge of all eternity, and for him to sacrifice for me, for you, to give his son. He's going to die for all of your sins in light of this beautiful picture of him returning any moment now. Him coming back to judge the world in light of all that.

In light of him bringing you into heaven and showing you riches like you can't even imagine. Like, oh, you think you're rich now. Look at what you have waiting for.

In light of all of this, he says, now live your life in a way that makes sense. Like, if you really believe that, what should your life look like? I'm always evaluating my life and going, gosh, my life doesn't really make sense in this area. If I believe this, why am I doing this? That's what this is saying, is live your life.

Here's this beautiful story, and if you believe it, there ought to be changes in your life, right? I mean, don't we all do this where we look at certain things in our lives and we go, that really doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense. I thought of this illustration.

You guys remember these? Did you ever use these, Ron? Yeah, in the olden days, they, uh... It, um... You, like, weigh things. Others of you guys use this for drugs and stuff. But, um... You know you have.

I was never in that world. But, um... Because they still use that for that, right? All right. Um... 11 o'clock, they'll know.

It, uh... But it's the idea, this idea of worthy. Okay, the idea of worthy is, you know, you would... Pretend this is you. The idea, here's you and here's your life.

You know, you put it on one side of the scale, and then it says, the idea of worthy is equal weight. Here's the truth of what you've learned, and the beauty of this gospel. It says, if you put the gospel on this one side, and then put your life on the other, is your life of equal value, of equal worth? Are you living a life? Look at the way you're living.

Is it worthy of this truth you say you believe, or does it look like this? Where it's just out of balance. Where you go, man, I say I believe that, man, any moment, I'm going to stand with God, and all of this won't even matter, except what I did for Him. Well, then look at your life.

Does it really equal to the truth you say you believe? You say you believe that you've got this redemption from God, and you've been forgiven, and everything's been taken care of. Well, do people see that on your face, then? Or is it this joy of this equal... I mean, you're telling people you communicate with God Almighty. You're telling people that you're not like them because God's Spirit is inside of you.

He used to not be, but now God dwells inside of you. The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is inside of your body. Now, you believe that truth that you're a completely transformed being.

Well, does your life match up to what you say you believe? Or are the scales just not where... He said, whatever you do, live your life in a way that's equal to what you say you believe. I mean, another thing that I think of, okay, according to this book, there's this place called hell, this lake of fire, and you just think, okay, does my life look like I really believe that there's a place like that? You know, when people look at my life, could they tell that there's an urgency to what I do and how I live? Do they see that there's a joy and a peace? Because I know the God of the universe. Do they look and do they say, wow, He really believes that His God could come back any time.

I can see it in His life. And that's why Paul says, whatever you do, just make it match up. He goes, it's not about this form or that form.

I don't care where you work. I don't care this, that, where you live. He goes, just have your life make sense.

Live in a way that's, in a manner that's worthy of the gospel of Christ. And I would see things in my life where I go, man, it doesn't seem like it makes sense. It seems like the weight of the gospel is far stronger.

And so you look at the things in your life and go, gosh, what doesn't make sense? A lot of you guys know that I took the family and I just pulled everyone out of everything and said, let's just go to Asia for a while. And if the Lord calls us there, let's just stay there. Let's just sell everything and let's just go to Asia.

And if we're supposed to stay in India, let's stay in India. And if not, we'll move on to Thailand. If we're supposed to stay in Thailand, let's just stay there.

We've got nothing holding us back. And then let's go to China.

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