

The Eternal Purpose

by Fred Tomlinson

This sermon delves into the uncertainty and fog of today's culture, emphasizing the Bible as the infallible source that reveals the meaning of life through the progression towards a divine marriage. It highlights the bride of Christ, the cost Jesus paid for his bride, and the journey of believers awaiting the marriage supper of the Lamb. The sermon concludes by urging listeners to embrace God's purpose and invest their lives in Him.

Scripture: Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, John 17:24, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 2:8, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Revelation 19:7, 1 Thessalonians 4:16

Topics: "Divine Purpose", "The Bride of Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Well it's a pleasure to be able to speak with you today. I want to make a couple of remarks first of all. I'll just comment on something that you all know very very well indeed and that is that we're living at a time in today's culture that is reminiscent of a trek through an eerie dense fog, a fog of uncertainty.

There's uncertainty everywhere and on virtually every level there are questions and uncertainty about the future and we could make a long list of areas where people feel this uncertainty or where the uncertainty touches their lives in one way or another. And the way that people deal with this kind of uncertainty that we're facing of course varies a great deal. I think we could safely say that people deal with this current uncertainty which is just exploding before us at this point in time in ways ranging from from panic to que sera sera, you know whatever will be will be.

It's just a fact of life. I think that there are others who probably are more philosophical in the way that they deal with what's going on and they may conclude with Shakespeare's Macbeth. I was reading a bit of this earlier in the week when he made a reference to life.

He said life is 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. I want to say this

afternoon that I thank God from the depths of my heart for my parents.

I made some reference to my background this morning in the meeting but I'm so grateful to God for giving me the parents he gave me because they gave to me the Bible and they taught me that the Bible is inspired by the very Spirit of God himself and I remember the motto that was common back then read mark learn and inwardly digest and I thank God for that more than more than my words can tell because it plotted a course for my life that I was completely unaware of at the time but I look back over these many decades and I thank God and I do I do I thank God for my mom and my dad and for other relatives and for the elders in the assemblies that we were involved with who loved me and assisted me more than they would ever realize as well but they taught me that the the Bible which was made available to me and which I was encouraged to read and study contains an undeviating storyline it's it's if you like in today's lingo it's a meta-narrative it's a storyline that progresses through the Scriptures as the Scriptures turn or the pages turn of the Scripture it's a story which is unfolding progressively and pinnacles ultimately in the closing chapters of the Bible and the Bible the book I have right here and very possibly your holding is the only infallible source of information that addresses the mystery of the ages it's the only infallible statement or group of statements that address the issue of meaning in life itself and the question could be well how how does it do that how does the Bible address the meaning of life and answer the kind of questions that people are asking in the midst of all the present confusion and the answer to that a truthful answer would be well it does it in a whole variety of ways however this afternoon in the time allocated for me I believe I will just touch on three of the many areas which could provide an answer to the question I believe that the Bible itself provides meaning for life and by exposing to me where history is moving what it is moving toward the Bible explains that for me the fact is that the the end of history as we know it according to the Bible will not be the end of everything the Bible teaches that there is meaning that God has for the world form for the people who will be his people he has a purpose and he has meaning and this as a truth is woven like a golden thread all the way through the scriptures for us and the Bible teaches us as I've already suggested to you and reminded you it moves to a climax as we get toward the end of the Bible and into the very last chapters of the Bible and we find that the goal to which God has been moving through the ages of time has been toward a marriage it's a by speaking of this mystery as a marriage and it's God who chose to do this he's choosing an analogy to illustrate and help us to understand that which is in his heart for men and women everything is moving toward a marriage it's not a marriage it is the marriage it is the marriage of the ages and it is the result of God's planning God's design God's planning and God attending to the issue through the passing centuries of time through the millennia of time we believe that God is a God who never changes his plan never changes he's not altering his plan according to circumstances of how things are turning out in the world or what's happening politically or how someone feels about what he's doing he is the sovereign God and he has made a plan in eternity and he's introduced it into time as we shall see a little more in a moment and it's on track it's on schedule as we would say there is nothing that is going to upset or interrupt his plan and his purpose in any way in any detail we know that in biblical times there were a couple of features probably more than a couple that identified marriage and in particular a wedding there's a faint shadow of them perhaps in weddings today but it's a shadow that is getting fainter as time goes on but a wedding in Bible times involved two specific events the first event was a betrothal today we may speak of me coming engaged but there was a betrothal and then there was the wedding ceremony itself these two events would be separated by a period of time the fact is that as the betrothal took place this involved covenant obligations which were specified to the family concerned of the bride in particular and there were covenant obligations that pertained to faithfulness that were required and the whole marriage when the time came for that to take place involved the bridegroom leaving his house and making his way to the bride's home and he would

collect the bride and then he would take the bride with him back to his home where there would be a marriage feast and which would take place we can't help but relate this to scriptures that were many of us are very familiar with at this point in time but that was that was what would be normal in the context of the moment when God was speaking and giving forth these words and expressing his purposes through the Apostles and through the visions given to John in Revelation and so on so what we have before us really is a very powerful analogy of that which is the culmination of everything that is recorded in scripture the marriage of the Lamb as we know it and so on at this point in time that the bride is comprised of men and women who have been clearly chosen of God and have responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ they have been born again at the Spirit of God and by the Spirit of God and they've entered into an engagement with the Lord Jesus Christ and in that sense they've entered into covenant with him concerning themselves concerning their lives concerning their faithfulness toward him that they have separated themselves from every other and from every other attraction and so much so that their whole lives are preoccupied with him with whom they will be wedded in the fullness of time and we know that at this time there is that covenant relationship but it's not become as it were a contract relationship at this point in time there's a there's a covenant that has been entered into already at this point in time the bride is she is his already in a very real sense as part of this response to the covenant extended to her she's his and she will now spend this interim period of time awaiting eagerly awaiting the consummation of that which has already been entered into at that point in time for the Church of Jesus Christ today that is exactly where she stands at this point in time for those who have responded from the depths of their hearts to the invitation of the Christian gospel and the opportunity and privilege of the Christian gospel such persons have devoted themselves wholeheartedly to him and have chosen to forsake all other and to live their lives according to his pleasure and in a manner that will honor him alone again already she the church is his but she is awaiting the consummation here in a very unique way in this as it were betrothal period the Church of Jesus Christ those who are truly his they're already indwelt by his life and by his spirit he our great bridegroom already possesses her heart's affections she has made herself ready she awaits the groom standing ready in her pure white bridal attire with bated breath she awaits the appointed hour and she senses his coming is very near listen listen to the bridegroom's heart I hear it when he speaks to his own father I'm quoting from John 17 he said father I desire note that word I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am so they may behold my glory I love the way the Apostle Paul speaks of this relationship he speaks about the true Christian church as a glorious church having not spot or wrinkle or any such thing but she should be holy and without blemish I'm wondering where you are in all of this I'm wondering what these statements and these few references of scripture I've quoted mean to you today perhaps you've never thought of your relationship with Jesus in these ways I believe the Spirit of God is speaking to you today this is not a matter of merely attending a church assembly or being faithful to a church assembly or any of the particular activities or responsibilities as part of a Christian assembly this has to do with your own individual and very personal responses to the Spirit of God as he seeks to draw you let me reread that statement from John 17 I desire that they also whom you who gave me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory this is the heart of he who is the Lamb of God he who is Christ our Saviour he is the one who by his Spirit is speaking to you today I believe that at this point in time those who are truly his are waiting for his arrival to our home that will be quite an affair some suggest it will be a silent affair I find no scripture in the Bible that suggests it will be quiet my Bible is open to first Thessalonians if you'd like to be with me I'm in chapter 4 I'm going to read several verses to you from verse 13 but we do not want you to be uninformed brethren about those who are asleep that's those who've passed from this scene already so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so God will bring with him those who have fallen

asleep in Jesus for this we say to you by the word of the Lord that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep for the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise first then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we shall always be with the Lord therefore comfort one another with these words I'm turning in my Bible over into the book of Revelation in chapter 19 and I want to read in chapter 19 from verse 5 and a voice came from the throne saying give praise to our God all you his bond servants you who fear him the small and the great then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters like the sound of many peals of thunder saying hallelujah for the Lord our God the almighty reigns let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to him for the marriage of the lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen bright and clean for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints and he said to me right blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the lamb and he said to me these are the true words of God amen how wonderful is all of this and from that point on I believe that those people now gather together in the greatest reunion that will ever take place ever anywhere that will be those who will move on to live and exist in the new creation so much more could be said about these things than I'm able to but Charles Wesley just simply says that they will through all eternity prove to will prove his nature and his name is love I'm attempting to answer the question how does the bible give to us meaning for life and I'm suggesting that it does it first of all by revealing to us where history is headed history is heading toward that great marriage which is the central feature of all that God is doing in these days but then the bible is able to provide meaning to our lives also by revealing to us the enormous price that Christ would need to pay in order to gain that bride of which I have spoken the fact of the matter is that the bridegroom is utterly holy he is the king of kings and the lord of lords the bride of which we're speaking is utterly corrupt and evil the men and women who comprise this company are all creatures of dust there is no comparison whatsoever we're dealing with a god who said that he cannot even look upon sin and these are creatures of sin that he has set his heart upon and desires to have with him for all of eternity he would need to make the impossible possible because for the men and women concerned the text of scripture reads like this for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God that's Romans chapter 3 verse 23 in chapter 6 verse 23 it says the wages of sin is death Ezekiel had said the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 18 verse 4 he said the soul that sinneth it shall die this is God speaking how in the world we ask particularly if we had never read the bible those of us listening probably have read the bible you know how this story unfolds but the fact remains that there is an incongruity of the most extreme kind between the one who is standing as a bridegroom and she who is standing as a bride how can this situation be resolved how can there be a reconciliation which will enable fellowship and a union of holiness to exist between the two I quoted to you from Romans chapter 6 verse 23 for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God but that verse continues by saying but the gift of God is eternal life Paul writes to the Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 4 and he says but God who is rich in mercy because of his love wherewith he has loved us even when we were dead in our transgressions made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved well that is decidedly incredible and decidedly wonderful in the extreme but it still leaves us a question and the question is this how can God who is just and utterly and completely holy show mercy how can he do that he he he God is absolute justice that's who he is and he God is absolutely merciful but these are again complete opposites and we do know this I remember how that Paul writes to the Romans again and he's speaking of the gospel in Romans 1 16 and verse 17 he says in reference to the gospel he's been describing in verse 16 he says for in it referring to what he's just been talking about the gospel for in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith

really the fact is that God in his justice cannot take any shortcut to accomplish the end that we're talking about and he cannot turn a blind eye to man's sinful condition he cannot sweep man's guilt under the carpet as though it didn't matter to take this issue that we're looking at just now further would take more time than we have available to us just now but I think one scripture would help us greatly I'm turning back to 2nd Corinthians and I'm turning to the 5th chapter it's a verse that those who are sitting in front of me will know very well but in chapter 5 and the very last verse of the chapter I read this and let me just tell you before we get here to read it that in this one verse I believe the entire gospel is summarized in this one verse and there's a point of interest which is not of any great interest to most of us is that it involves 15 Greek words and in these in these short words here in this one verse we have the Christian gospel summarized and the answer supplied to our question how can God be just and justify the sinner and the verse reads like this he that is he God he God the father he made him that's the son of God the Lord Jesus Christ he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in him wonderful Romans chapter 3 excuse me turning through so many different scriptures but I'm in chapter 3 and in verse 26 I read I say of his righteousness at the present time I've taken this out of its context excuse me for this one statement here so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus that's Romans 3 verse 26 all right so we got the gospel here in this verse we'll look at it just a little bit more in a moment but this is a series of statements that supply the answer to this incredible question of how God could make the impossible a possibility how he could remain completely just and holy and righteous and at the same time provide mercy and salvation for guilty lost sinners and so transform their standing before him that they could qualify to become part of this great bride that will be united to him for all of eternity I will just summarize this this verse quite simply by saying this that God treated Jesus on the cross God treated Jesus as if he had lived my life so that he could treat me as though I had lived his life God judged him as if he was me let me put a different way the death he died credited to me what it was credited to me so that the life which he had lived could be credited to me it's wonderful that's the gospel in a nutshell certainly but it's the truth and Paul has a grip and an understanding of this great truth let me just read a collection of verses in series which I've already alluded to but I'm in Ephesians chapter 2 where he covers it a little more fully he says and you who were dead in your trespasses and in sins in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience among them we too formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and whereby nature children of wrath even as the rest but God who is rich in mercy because of his great love were with he loved us even when we were dead in transgressions made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in heavenly places in Christ so that in the ages to come he might show the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus for by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not as the result of work so that anyone could boast for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them amen the question before us earlier was how does the bible give meaning to life the bible gives meaning to life because it shows us where history is headed and also it reveals to us the enormous cost that Jesus paid in order to purchase his bride she would be purchased with his own precious blood but also thirdly the bible gives meaning to life by making sense of the journey i am now traveling i want us to look briefly at what this grace means to us today let me illustrate by reading something i wrote this down so i'd get some order to these few thoughts but in 1961 a huge plan was drawn up in england blueprints were drawn 346 acres were purchased near to my home in liverpool huge numbers of skilled men were called upon and were employed and they were employed to construct something truly amazing hundreds and hundreds of truck loads of material were

brought from many parts of the country all the very latest technology would be incorporated into this hundreds of complex robots would be constructed and positioned strategically and stationed strategically along a 10 mile long assembly line all at a cost of 30 million pounds at that point in time there were adverts in the newspapers they wanted hundreds of men to come and work in the plant in 1963 city dignitaries and lots of pomp and circumstance they were standing at the far end of this 10 mile assembly line a curtain dropped and out came a humble ford anglia all of that being done planned designed engineered constructed hundreds and hundreds of hours thousands of hours involved in order for this humble little british ford anglia to come out the other end of the assembly line if you're still following me in your bible open your bible to the book of romans please and to chapter eight for a very important verse of scripture i was going to say one of the one of the most important in the bible that's very difficult to say because there are so many of them but you'll know this verse it's the 28th verse of romans 8 listen to paul and we know listen to this we know that god causes all things to work together for the good it says for good it should it should the word good has the as the um and in the greek should be prefixed with the word the but it doesn't read very well for us but it should be there we know that all things it's the definite article in the greek for we know that god causes all things to work together for the good to those who love god to those who are called according to his purpose i want you to i mean you don't need to do it physically but think of those words all things as being highlighted in your bible he causes all things to work together for the good not so my life will be peaches and cream and everything will run smoothly and i have no difficulties no challenges whatsoever in the whole of my life it's for the good the good according to god's eternal purpose what this tells me as i've reflected already on the hailwood ford plant which is now a jaguar plant and produces never mind but the fact of the matter is that was that was just a poor illustration that occurred to me to remind me that when i start off reading my bible i read these words in the beginning god and he created heaven and earth can you believe this this is a challenge for every one of us that god in eternity i don't understand eternity i don't believe any of us can but somewhere god conceived a plan and god made decisions and he made choices and ordained things there without asking any human being for their opinion i'm not convinced he invited anybody for their opinion in heaven but within the godhead decisions were reached and design beyond our wildest imaginations were formulated and god in the fullness of his time he created a cosmos and he created a colorful little globe in one of the universes that he created that we know as earth and he caused he caused light to come about he caused heat to become a reality he called caused sound to become a reality he called magnetism to become a reality he caused electricity to become a reality he caused life to come into existence he created an eden he created human life he himself became incarnated and came and lived upon this earth he surrendered himself to his father's will and to the brutal violence of human nature and gave his life as an offering for us upon a cross having raised from the dead he gave the holy spirit he gave forth the holy spirit into this world with a divine purpose and intention plus plus plus plus i've been vague in these few statements that i've made but then from that point every single thing in history that he has permitted to take place has been according to his sovereign oversight and according to his purpose and his purpose was the calling together of a people and the preparation of those people to become corporate members of that bridal company who will be united to god's son for all and for eternity amen where do we take this i can make all this even more personal and i don't know where to begin with this but i can think of early in the second world war and he caused a little group a little handful of christian people to decide to have an open air meeting in the in a cul-de-sac of a back entry behind a few houses and a lady was looking out the window and heard the singing in the back street and she went down to join those people and she gave her heart to jesus that night she went to hospital with her mother who was crippled with arthritis and before she'd gone there she put a little we call it a badge in england but a little button with a christian text on it there we didn't have a

problem with the word cripple in those days but a crippled man saw the woman and read the badge and they fell in love and got married and i am the product of that relationship all this and so much more took place within the scope of my life all so that ultimately a humble ford anglia no a man an obscure and sinful man could be included in the bridal company in the glory of god an english poet robert browning he made this statement he fixed the mid this dance of plastic circumstance i add to that that in that seeming plastic circumstance in it and through it god controls and steers men and women in his plan and purpose to its fruition where the text i quoted earlier can be quoted with confidence and we know that god causes all things to work together for the good to those who love god to those who are called or being called according to his purpose this that we're looking at this afternoon is the good this is the meta narrative this is the big story this is the eternal purpose this beloved is the truth let me just ask one more time how does the bible which is the divinely inspired inerrant book provide meaning to life it does it by revealing where history is headed it does it by revealing the enormous cost that christ paid for his bride and it does it by making sense of the journey that i'm traveling on my dear friend god has invested so much to bring you to this moment don't squander your precious life pursuing secular and material things but give yourself to god today in doing so you will discover the purpose for your life amen

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