

Calling, Vision, and Passion

by Paul Negrut

The sermon emphasizes the interconnectedness of calling, vision, and passion in fulfilling God's purpose for our lives.

Duration: 45:24

Scripture: Luke 19:11

Topics: "Christian Service", "Spiritual Passion"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a man who went to church to preach his last sermon. He was going through a difficult time in his life and nobody knew about his decision. During the sermon, he cried and wept, pouring out his heart. Afterward, he asked if anyone had heard God's message and was willing to respond and surrender. Seven people came forward. The preacher then reflects on the importance of having passion and joy in serving God, even in hostile environments. He contrasts the positive reports of the first two servants in a parable from Luke 19 with the negative attitude of the third servant. The sermon emphasizes the significance of calling, vision, and passion in our lives as Christians.

Transcript

A gentleman was saved and he joined a local church and he felt that God is calling him to serve in that local church as an encourager. And the person he felt he should encourage every week was the person who led the church, the pastor. So every Sunday he would be there at the door to shake hands with his pastor and he looked into the eyes of his pastor and said, Great sermon pastor, great sermon.

One Sunday, however, the sermon was very poor and in all honesty he couldn't go and say great sermon pastor. But still he felt that he should encourage his pastor. So he prayed about and he was in line with the others and when the moment came to shake the hands of his pastor, he looked straight into his eyes and said, Great text preacher, great text today.

I'm inviting you to open your Bibles at a great text. The Gospel of Luke, chapter 19. The Gospel of Luke, chapter 19.

And I have my friend, another of my heroes, who is coming to do the reading for us. Joel, it's so good to have you. Luke 19, 11 to 27.

And again, he says, For when those who turn from their sheep to feed them, they will need new servants to be called into them. If you can't get them the money, then you might know how much every man in the kingdom might trade you. Then he came to the first saying, Poor, but I'll give you ten pounds.

And he said again, Well, I'll give you ten pounds, because that's what you can put in a very little. That's what I have before you for ten cities. And the second came saying, Poor, but I'll give you five pounds.

And he said, What's in the man? He said, Also, five cities. And the third came saying, Poor, behold, here's my kingdom, which I have kept laid up in a basket. Five cities, and I'll give you all the seed in them.

That which thou layest not down, and rapist, that which thou didst not sow. And he said unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knowest that I was an astute man, and taking up that which I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow.

Wherefore then gaveest thou not my money into the bank, that at my coming I should have required mine own with usury? Then he said unto him that stood by, take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds. For I say unto you, that unto every one which hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him.

But these mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me. Thank you very much. Isn't that great? Amen.

Would you like to pray for the next generation and for us as we spend, brother, like to pray for us? Yes. Yes. A journalist went to interview some people that were working on a building.

He approached the first one and asked him, may I ask you, what are you doing? And a little irritated, the fellow said, I'm cutting stones, can't you see? And the journalist went a little further and asked another one, may I ask you what are you doing? And the man said, I'm earning bread for my family. The journalist went to another one and asked the same question, may I ask you what you are doing? And the man said, we are building a cathedral to the glory of our God. Three people in the same place, doing the same job.

One was cutting stones, and he was angry and bitter. The other was happy that he was earning bread for his family. The other knew that he is working for a bigger picture.

It's something for the glory of God. Luke 19 brings us a great lesson. It is a story told by our Lord.

About a master who called upon 10 of his servants, gave them his money while he was going to a foreign country. And he gave them the money to invest them, to administer them. And this afternoon, we'll look at this story, focusing on calling, vision, and passion.

The story actually begins with the calling. The master called his servants. Actually, the history of our universe began with the calling.

Our God called the whole universe into being. This is the calling of creation. One word and everything came into being.

And the Bible says that he is such a great God that he is calling things that do not exist, and they come into being. Well, when I understood that greatness of God, it sort out a number of hard questions for me, that I'm asked constantly as I'm traveling to meet university students. One of the question is, do you

believe that literally there was a fish that could swallow Jonah, and Jonah could live for three days in the belly of a fish? Has there ever been identified such a fish? Well, my question is, does God need the president to do something else? Does God need a fish before the fish that was for Jonah? If he calls into being things that do not exist, and they come into being, what do you think? Well, that's enough to me.

Some people are asking me if I believe Genesis 1 to 11 as being literal presentation of the history of our universe. Well, if I believe the first scripture there, first verse, at the beginning, God created. Everything else falls into place.

So God has called the whole universe into being. We are not here by accident. Each one of us has been called by God into being.

Then there is another call. God is calling us unto salvation. You see, our salvation is not something that crossed our minds.

And one day, human beings coming out of monkeys decided that they need some sort of metaphysics. No, it's God's calling. We are saved because he called us.

We responded to his call. But he initiated the first step. And that's the calling unto salvation.

Now, there is another calling that Jesus is speaking about here, calling to ministry. There's another calling. God is calling us to serve him.

He is calling us to do something as our part in his great work in our history. In the story, the master called 10 servants. And those servants responded to the calling.

But as soon as we look at that, how they responded, what was there, we see that in that calling is in-built a vision. God's calling always has in it a vision. It is God's calling and God's given vision.

Now, vision is not something that we see in an ecstatic experience, or we close our eyes and we say, well, I have a vision. Vision is not our wishful thinking. Vision is not even our ambition or our agenda.

Vision is something given by God. He called his servants, gave them the money and said, put this money to work. Vision is not just the capacity to see the world as it is.

Vision is the spiritual gift from God to see the world as it should be and could be and ought to be. Vision is that God-given capacity to see the things how they could be. Do you have that vision? Do you understand God's vision for your life? There's a great story in the book of Daniel when King Belshazzar sees that hand that writes on the wall and it says it was number, it was divided, it was weighted, and it says that your days were numbered, your kingdom will be taken from you, but you've been put on weight.

God weighted you and you are found wanting. Now, if God put him on a scale, on one side was King Belshazzar, what was on the other side? Definitely was not Moses, was not Daniel, was not Joshua. I think was King Belshazzar as he should have been.

What was God's plan for him? God's vision for him? And he didn't match to that. He was found wanting. You see, God has a unique plan for you and a unique plan for me.

God will never bring me to judgment because I was not like Moses. I was not like the Apostle Paul. God will show me what I could have become by his grace.

And what was in his calling as his vision for me? Now, when the master called the servants, in that calling, there was the vision. And as soon as we captured that vision, the vision was to be in the master's service, to do something for the master. That vision immediately is sparking passion.

You see, always vision is leading us to passion and passion is that kind of life when all our energies are focused in one direction. We are single-minded. Have you seen passionate people about football? They know all the football teams in this country.

They know all the football players. They know the size of their shoes. They know their favorite meal.

They know their girlfriends. They know what kind of cologne or aftershave they use. They are crazy passionate about that.

But in God's calling to us, there is the vision what the master has in plan for you and me. And that vision should lead us to passion. And we should be passionate about our king.

Passionate about him. Know his word. Know his will.

And be passionate about his business. If that calling does not stir passion in our hearts, probably we either haven't heard the calling or we do not take it seriously. Either we haven't heard the calling or we are not taking that seriously.

We do have a seminary in Romania and we have many students. Many, not compared to your seminaries. We have about 500.

And almost every year, we see some students who are just fooling around. And we call them to a meeting with some of the professors who are pastors, acting pastors, and we talk to those students and see two things. Have they heard the calling from God? Because you're sitting in a ministry if you have not had the calling from God.

Sooner or later, you will ask yourself, what am I doing here? If you cannot say, I am here because I heard the calling. So we see if they have heard the calling. Secondly, we look at them to see if they are serious about that calling.

And if they had the calling but they are not serious, do you know what we do with them? We send them home for one year. Can you imagine a student packing his suitcase and going home to his family and to his church? And they ask, what's going on? Well, he said, I was sent home from the school. Why? Because I'm not living up to my calling.

I'm not passionate about my calling. I'm not passionate about the business. I'm not passionate about the gospel.

And if they are not passionate, you see they are the bad, the worst advertisement to the kingdom of God. I heard a story about two young boys that were from non-Christian families and there was a church in their village and their parents will not let them go to church because obviously the parents were against and one night when the church had a meeting, the two boys went and they stare through the window on that church but just one of them was tall enough to see on the window. The other was down there and said, can you see? Yes, I can.

What are they doing? I don't know what they are doing but they seems not happy with what they are doing. They are doing something that they are not happy with. In the communist days of Romania, every person in our church was asked to consider if he or she wants to remain a member of the church, to have minimum one hour a day reading the Bible and praying, minimum one hour.

Well, when I hear five minutes with God, that's not fast food, it's not drive through. Then we ask them to have a prayer list and put on that list all their family members, all their relatives, all their colleagues, all their friends who are not saved and pray for them by name every single day. Then we ask them to live such a holy life, such a life of obedience and such a life of integrity that those people ask, what's different with you? And then they will say, well, this is what happened to my life and I want to present my master, my savior to you.

When we had revivals, we allow in our churches only those church members that came with unsaved friends. Those church members that do not bring unsaved friends are asked to stay out on the street or the courtyard. Only those who are with non-saved friends are allowed to come in.

One week we had a revival and a young boy has worked hard to invite all his colleagues and none of them responded and he barely wanted to come in. So on the way to church, we have public transportation in Romania, he was on the tram and he approached an elderly lady and she said, ma'am, excuse me. I am going to a meeting, but there are some strange rules there and unless I bring someone, they will not let me in.

Ma'am, I so badly want to get in. Could you be so kind to me? Just walk me in and if you don't like, you get out. But please just walk me in.

And because he was so passionate in his pleading, that lady decided to walk him in. And when she saw, when she heard, she decided that she will not leave and she was saved that night. Now, when we have baptism in our church, we always have all our new converts through a baptism class that goes for minimum three months.

And we present the basic teaching of the Bible. Be sure that they understand exactly who God is and what is salvation and what is involving that calling, what kind of conduct, what kind of life is God teaching us to live? And after three months, each one of them is personally interviewed by the pastor and the deacons of the church to see if they have a clear understanding of the gospel. If they read the Bible, because if they are saved and they are not in love with the gospel, with the word of God, something is wrong with that salvation.

Now, if they understand, then we look and try to see if there is evidence of a transformed, changed life. And we ask the families, Christian or non-Christian, and we ask the school teachers, and if they work, we ask their bosses. Now, can you imagine that I will come and ask your boss at your working place, have you seen something different in his or her life? Can you testify that there is a transformed life? If all these things come together, the clear understanding, the testimony from the family, the testimony from school or from the working place, then we accept them for baptism.

If not, we tell them, we do not question your sincerity in praying and receiving Christ. What we see is that there is no clear evidence of your transformed life for your family and for the others. And if you come to openly confess in baptism that you died with Christ and you was raised to the newness of life, and they do not see new life, they will say, that's a game.

Now, if that is done, they invite all their friends to come and see baptism. And then once a year, we have a Thanksgiving day in our church. Do you know how our Thanksgiving day is? It's not with roast turkey.

We have few baskets with some of the crops of the year there on the platform, but in front of our church, we can sit about 3,500 in our church. And we have about 5,000 there. The front seats are reserved for those who came to salvation that year.

And next to them, we'll see the person who led them to Christ. And then we have a time when they pray for each other. It's a corporate prayer.

And those who are saved, thank God for those who presented the gospel to them, pray for them, invited them to church. Those who led them to Christ, thank God for those who are saved that year. Now, just imagine that you will be a deacon in my church.

And this year, you sit on the back, no one sits up front here. And there's a time when we pray and thank God for what he's done in our lives through his grace. And you are there, and you are a deacon.

How would you feel? I tell you what happens. Those deacons get broken. And so, Lord, what's wrong in my life? What's wrong in my life? When I accepted the calling to be a pastor, I took a decision for my life.

Many decisions, but one of them was this. If one year in my ministry as a pastor, no one comes to know Christ, either through my preaching or through my testimony, living, I submit my resignation as a pastor to that church. And the church knows that.

I shared that decision one day with an elderly pastor, and he was so angry with me. He used harsh words, and he accused me of pride, and he said, who are you to set up such rules? And I said, brother, please don't be offended with me. Don't be upset with me.

This rule is not for you. It's for me. I took this decision for my life.

Yes, he said, but that's not right. And in anger and bitterness, he left. He came to me about two years later.

And he told me what happened. He went home, but that thought couldn't get out of his mind. Because for 25 years, no one witnessed that he or she came to know Christ through his ministry.

In 25 years, no baptism in his church. And one night, the Holy Ghost just arrested him. He woke up, he knelt down and said, Lord, here is my decision.

If until the end of this year, no one comes to know Christ through my ministry, on the last day of the year, we meet in the church that night for a night of prayer. That New Year Eve, I will preach my last sermon as a pastor, and I submit my resignation. And no one, no one came to know Christ.

So the last evening came, he went to church. Nobody knew what was happening in his life. Nobody knew about his decision.

And he stood up to preach his last sermon. And he cried his heart out. He wept and he was sobbing.

When the sermon was over, he asked, there is anyone to whom God spoke that night? And he said, if there is anyone that heard God's message tonight, and you are willing to respond and surrender, please

come forward. And the next seven people stood up and they came forward. He came to me and said, please forgive me for those harsh words.

But I learned that the one who saw with tears, do you know what happens? Is reaping with joy. My dear friends, if there is no passion in us, if there is no passion, can you imagine those 10 servants in a hostile environment? Sometimes we have the joy and the grace to live in a friendly environment, friendly to the gospel. Gospel friendly environments.

But sometimes the environment is so hostile. Those servants work in a hostile environment. And just imagine the first one of them, working hard.

And when the master came back home, can you see his report, master? Your pound has earned 10 more pounds. Can you hear the joy? The passion in that report, master, your pound has earned 10 more pounds. The second came with the same joy, master, your pound has earned five more pounds.

What an excitement. What a joy. Now, how many of you ever attended a business meeting in your local church? That general assembly at the end of the year, when you have the business agenda, you go through everything and there are reports and there are discussions and there are debates.

How many of you ever attended at least one of them? Thank you very much. Now I want you to do me a favor. Please do count the number of words that the first servant spoke, the number of words that the second servant spoke, and the number of words the third servant spoke.

Please do help me with that. I know how many words are in Romanian. Please do count the number of words the first servant spoke, the second servant, and the third servant.

The 30, 39. The second, the third, and the second, seven. And the first one, seven.

Now, we have the general assembly of the servants. And now they, they want to have a speech. The first one, who has worked a lot, has a very, very short presentation at the general assembly, at the business meeting.

The second, who has worked a lot, has a very nice short report. Master, thy pound has earned 10 more or five more. The third one, 39 words.

Now, we would expect that those 39 words are great words of report and great stories about what has happened, but you know what is there? In 39 words, he is speaking angry and in a negative fashion about whom? About the master. He is unhappy with the master. Now, when you see the calling, you see the vision, you see the passion, none of those things are in the life of this third servant.

Only anger and bitterness and self-righteousness and for everything else, someone else is guilty. It seems that he has studied Sigmund Freud. Someone else is responsible.

I told you what we do at our Thanksgiving. Second year's Thanksgiving. Imagine that you are a deacon in my church and again, you sit on the back because you are not there with those who came to know Christ.

Do you know what happens? I ask them to step down and I tell them, unless you have a heart that is passionate for the Lord and is passionate for his kingdom, unless you agonize, you cannot lead others. Just imagine that we will all step down and tell our churches that we stepped down because we haven't been fruitful that year. Do you know what will happen in our churches? Do you know what will happen if we

stand for Christ 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, wherever we are? You may say, you do not know where I work.

You do not know my environment. Yes, that's true, I do not know. But let me tell you something about my other job.

In addition to being a pastor and working in a Christian university, I do teach psychology at the State University of Oradea. There is a state university with 38,000 students. And they asked me to teach psychology and I teach two classes, theories of personality and family psychology.

Let me tell you how I teach theories of personality. I outline my course and tell them what we will do. We look at great schools of theories of personality.

We look at psychodynamic, we look at the humanist and look at behaviorism, social learning and traits and theories. And they say, well, we'll go from Sigmund Freud and his disciples, Alfred Bandura and his disciples. We go to Gordon Allport and his disciples and B.F. Skinner and his disciples and Maslow and his disciples and so forth.

And they just outline them. I said, now we'll finish the course. And look at what Jesus Christ, the Son of God says about human personality.

And the last class, the last course, I teach what Jesus says about human being. And I present the gospel. And I said, now, we finish the class this way.

Please bow your heads and imagine that you have a psychological problem. And you have to make up a decision now at which door do you knock? Let's imagine that you knock at the door of Sigmund Freud. Let me tell you what he will tell you.

Sit on the couch the rest of your life and just pick out whatever crosses your mind. Well, if you go to B.F. Skinner, say, well, you are conditioned to be this way. If you go to Gordon Allport, well, in your gene, those are the traits, characters that are in your gene.

And you are like that, you cannot do otherwise. If you go to Bandura, I say, well, you learn that from the society. If you go to Jesus Christ, he will tell you there is sin in your heart.

And you are not right with God. And until you are born from above, you cannot get your things in order. So now you have to make a decision.

The decision you make today will influence your life and your eternity and the life and the eternity of your clients. It's your time of decision. Well, I told this story at the university in Canada, a Christian university in Canada.

I told them how I teach theories of personality in a state university, public university. And they said, wow, if we do that, we all lose our jobs. And I said, hallelujah.

Imagine that in Canada, 500 Christian psychologists will lose their jobs today. Do you know what will happen tomorrow? Revival. The whole Canadian country will look at 500 Christian psychologists and say, what's happened to those people that they gave up their jobs? What they stand for.

Now, if we stand for Christ at our working place, if we stand for Christ in our neighborhood, if we stand for Christ in our family, it may not be easy, but it is worth it. Because the day comes when the master look at our character. You see, at the end of the day, the master judges the motives of our hearts.

And says, well done, good and faithful servant. But as you lazy and wicked servant. You see, when we are not working according to his calling, he knows that we are lazy and that there's wickedness in our hearts.

Now, I know that life is not easy. During the days of communist persecution, I underwent through many, many persecution and many forms of persecution. But probably the most difficult time I reach in my life was when the communist attacked my family.

One day I was out preaching and the communist attacked our oldest daughter who was eight years of age at that time. When I came home, my wife was in shock and crying, and the little one was scared to death. I heard from my wife what happened and I felt that God is not fair to me.

I said, Lord, I have laid down my life to serve you. And I know why I pay this price. But this little girl has not even reached the age when she understands exactly what is going on in this country.

Lord, you are our savior. This is unfair, why do you allow that to happen? And there was a thought that crossed my mind. And the thought was to escape from Romania with my family.

Take my family and run away from the country as many others have done from the communist countries. And the more I thought, the more that thought took roots in my mind as the right way to go. But before I made the final step, I went to visit with a friend of mine another pastor who paid a big, big price for standing for the gospel in a communist Romania.

I told him what happened. I told him what is creeping my mind and said, brother Paul, just stay for a few hours here in my apartment. I have to go somewhere, but I will be back within hours and I want to pray with you.

And I will tell you what I think. He went and hours later he came and he brought in his hand an old piece of paper. It was the letter written by a great man of God who was put in jail by the communist.

And he wrote that letter days before the communist kill him in prison. He knew that the communist have set up their mind to murder him. And he managed to get a piece of paper and write his last letter to his family.

It was a very unusual letter. It went something like this, dear Lord, I know that my time has come and within days I will get home and I will see you face to face. Dear Lord, I hardly wait that moment.

And Lord, I look with great expectation, anticipation to see the glory of heaven. And Lord, I look forward for that great day when all your great servants from around the world will come and bow at your throne. I look at it that great when all the martyrs will come and they will lay down the crowns at your feet.

And he expanded on that thought. And then said, dear Lord, grant me a special privilege for that day. Allow me to come in the uniform of Armenian prisoner because I want to glorify you all eternity as a prisoner for Christ.

Friends, when I read that letter, I was broken inside. I knelt down with my friend and I said, Lord, give me the grace to glorify you now and all eternity as a Romanian for Christ. Grant me the grace to stay here in

this country.

Went home, I told my wife, what did the Lord do to my heart? We knelt down with my wife and she prayed. Said, Lord, give me the same grace to stay with my family here and glorify you as a Romanian for Christ. That week, my wife was attacked on the street.

Later that year, I had a stroke under the pressure. My left side was paralyzed. Couldn't use my left hand and my left foot.

And my wife couldn't take me to a hospital because to be taken in a communist hospital when you are persecuted by secret police is to go to the death place. So my wife took me out in the country to a Christian family and she took care of me for three months. And eventually I recoup and we came back and we started to work.

Next spring, my wife had a stroke and I had to take her out. She recouped from that, we came home and that fall, I had a second stroke. And they can go on and on.

But do you see, in all those days, hundreds of people were saved and the gospel was spreading around. And the day came when communists collapsed. Now, do you imagine how I'd feel if I would have escaped from Romania and be with my family here and look at all that God is doing? That's not just for me.

It's for each and every one of us. Have you captured God's vision for your life? Are you passionate about that? Is that passion focusing all your energies in one direction? Are you single-minded about that? Or do you still struggle with divided heart? One day will come. And we'll not be at a prayer advance.

We'll all stand before our glorious Lord. Do you know what would be the greatest sentence I ever heard and I wanted to hear? To hear from my Lord, well done. Well done.

What else could give us the joy for eternity? That to know that the master who finished well gave us the grace to finish well. What is standing between you and God? That you haven't put all your life in a single direction to live for his glory. What would the kingdom of God miss if you were to die today and not be alive tomorrow? What would be missing in the kingdom of God if you are not around tomorrow? You see, I tell this on and on in our country and I tell them, I'm sorry you will not attend your own funeral to see what people will say when you are gone.

There's something very, very interesting to me in the book of Acts. You know, in the book of Acts, a deacon died and there were other deacons. An apostle died and there were other apostles.

And then one day Dorcas died. There was no one to replace her. So they all went to Peter and they wept and they cried and Peter had to raise her from the dead because there was no one to do her job.

You see, are you doing something that if you were to be gone, people will cry after you and say, Lord, there's no one to do what he does or she does for me. She did for your church. Let's have a moment of prayer.

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