

What Is Your Target

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the importance of pursuing Christ as our goal and living a life that is pleasing to Him.

Duration: 1:05:02

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 1:2, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Philippians 3:14

Topics: "Purpose", "Pursuit of Christ", "Eternal Goals"

Description

Stephen Kaung emphasizes the importance of pursuing a higher goal in life, drawing from Philippians 3:14, where Paul speaks of striving for the heavenly prize in Christ Jesus. He contrasts earthly pursuits such as wealth, fame, and pleasure with the ultimate fulfillment found in knowing Christ, echoing King Solomon's conclusion in Ecclesiastes that all is vanity without God. Kaung encourages believers to actively pursue a relationship with Christ, highlighting that true passion comes from the love of Christ that compels us to live for Him. He warns against complacency and urges the congregation to prepare for the Lord's return by living a life that reflects their commitment to God. The sermon concludes with a call to pursue Christ with passion, reminding the audience of the eternal significance of their choices.

Transcript

Philippians chapter 3 verse 14. I pursue looking towards the goal, the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. This is the verse that our theme is taken from.

Our dear brother Dana, he will share with us on the first look and God willing, I will share with your dear brothers and sisters of pursuing with passion and our dear brother Lance will speak on the prize. Now will you please read again chapter 3. We'll begin with verse 8. But surely I count also all things to be lost on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. On account of whom I have suffered the loss of all and count them to be few that I may gain Christ and that I may be found in him not having my righteousness which would be on the principle of law but that which is by faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God through faith.

May we have a word of prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, we want to thank thee for gathering us together this time before thy presence. We thank thee for thy love for us in giving us every opportunity to hear thy word to be prepared for thy glorious return.

And Lord as we gather together now in thy presence, may the glory of the Lord fill our heart that by faith we may follow thee all the way. How we praise and thank thee for thy excellency. O Lord, draw us that we

may all run after thee.

We ask in thy precious name. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters, we know that life is a pursuit.

Life is not static. Life is always seeking, looking, pursuing, running after something. Something that we put up as our goal, as our mark.

Only this will give us the meaning of life. If we have lost our goal, our life becomes meaningless. Everybody is seeking for something, is looking for something, is trying to get hold of something that is considered as precious, important, vital, absolutely needed for a satisfying life.

Some people will seek for wealth. They think that wealth will satisfy their life. Other people will seek for fame, as if fame is everything to them, and they are willing to labor for it, pay the price for it, in order to be famous.

And other people will put learning as their goal. They want to be learned, to be in the knowing. And there are still other people who are seeking for pleasure.

They think that pleasure alone is the meaning of life. Everybody is seeking, is running after, is pursuing, is trying to get hold of something that will satisfy their life, that will make them happy. But once you get to your goal, immediately you find it is empty.

You have to set your goal higher and higher. You're never satisfied. And this is what life really is.

You know, three thousand years ago, there was a king, King Solomon. He was the wisest of men. And in his old age, after he had experienced everything, and he had searched all things, he came to a conclusion.

So we have in the Bible the book called Ecclesiastics. The preacher. King Solomon became a preacher.

He was to announce, to pronounce, to proclaim something to the whole world on the basis of his finding, on the basis of his own experience. This is no sour grape. Because he had everything in his head.

Whatever his heart's desire, he will give it to him. There is nothing missing or lacking. But after he had experienced everything on earth, after he had considered all things under the sky, under the sun, he came out with a statement.

And that's how he began with his book of Ecclesiastics. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. Vanity of vanities.

All is vanity. What profit hath man of all his labor, wherewith he laboreth under the sun? This is his observation. This is his experience.

And he's sharing this with the whole world. He is telling us that everything under the sun is vanity. No matter what you are seeking, whether it is wealth, he has all the wealth.

Whether it is fame, he has the fame. Whether it is learning, understanding, he's the wisest of men. And when it is the pleasure, he try every phase of pleasure to satisfy himself.

But he came to this conclusion. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity.

There is no exception. Under the sun, everything you seek ends with vanity. So he said, what profit has man of all his labor, wherewith he labored under the sun? He tells us, everything goes on as a circle.

It comes and go, and it will return again. There is nothing new under the sun. What has happened before will happen again.

And furthermore, nothing will be remembered. Everything is transient, just for the time. And then it's forgotten.

There is nothing new under the sun. The eye is never satisfied with seeing. The ear is never satisfied with hearing.

We are never contented, never full. Everything is vanity of vanities. I wonder, brothers and sisters and friends, after we have traveled on this earth for a while, has it come to your understanding that what this wise man has said is really true? Nothing full, nothing satisfying, nothing.

But furthermore, he told us that there is nothing better than eat and drink and be merry. This is life. So go ahead and seek pleasure and seek all these other things.

But don't forget, above the sun, in heaven, there is God. He is watching. He has given people life.

And one day, He will judge. So you'll find when you go to this book of Ecclesiastics, to the very end in chapter 12, verses 13 and 14, He gave His advice. After you have seen all the vanities in this world, and you are able to eat and drink and be merry, and you have labored throughout your life, now what is the whole of man? In other words, what is the real meaning of man? Listen.

Let us hear the end of the whole matter. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

So knowing that there is God, the Creator, who created all things and who gave all things, He gave us life, He gave us time, He gave us talent, He gave us opportunities, we can enjoy everything that He has given us. But not forget that one day, everything will be judged by Him. Even the secret will be judged.

And in view of that, this wise man, this most experienced person in the world, he gave us some advice. How should we live on this earth? What is the whole meaning of man? He said, fear God and keep His commandments. You may enjoy everything that He has given to you, but while you are enjoying them, don't forget to fear God and keep His commandments.

That is His advice. Do you think this is a very wise advice? About a thousand years ago, there was a young man of Tarsus. His name was Saul.

You know, young men of every generation will usually set their goal on something under the sun. They will either seek for pleasure, for position, for power, for honor, or for pleasure. But this young man was different.

Even though he was young, he understood what King Solomon had advised. So he made up his mind. Instead of seeing vanity, vain things upon this earth, he will seek to fear God and to keep his commandments.

In other words, he is not going to live just for a temporary life. He is seeking for something that is eternal, that is truly worthwhile. So he rejected even all the things of this world.

He sought something religious, spiritual. He lived a life fearing God. The he was a Pharisee.

Now we all know that Pharisees are people who study the Bible, who keep the commandments, who was very careful to keep every letter of the Word. There have been very few Pharisees at every generation. But those who are true Pharisees, they are really people.

We will say pious, religious, moral, legalistic even. Every small letter of the Word, they will try to keep. And this man himself testified that so far as the letter of the law is concerned, he is blameless.

What a young man he was. But he was trained under the best rabbi at this time. According to all the traditions of the father, he was trying to build up his own righteousness, that he might be able to stand before God's judgment and pass.

But because he was completely trained by the traditions of the fathers, so to this young man he became a persecutor of Christians. Why? Because according to the traditions of their fathers, they considered Jesus as an imposter, as a traitor of the Jewish religion. So this young man was a zealous person.

He was so zealous that he became a leader in the persecution of the Christians. He was never able to persecute Christ himself, but he would persecute all the followers of Jesus Christ. Now remember, when he was doing that, he thought he was serving God, doing God a service.

And he put his whole heart into it. But one day, while he was going to Damascus with a letter from the high priest, to go to that foreign city to seize upon people of the way, those who followed the Lord Jesus, and to bring them to Jerusalem and sentence them, that was his error. But thank God, God knows the heart.

Even though what he was doing was truly a disservice to God, he was against the will of God in persecuting the Son of God, who came into this world to save us. And yet God knew that he was sincere. Therefore, while he was on his way to Damascus, not far from the city, suddenly at midday, a great light from heaven shone upon him.

He was smitten by that light. He fell to the ground, and there he heard a voice. So, so, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the good.

This is the voice of our Lord Jesus. He has ascended on high, seated at the right hand of God the Father. And there, he was talking to this young man.

This young man did not know him, but he knew the young man. So, so, why do you persecute me? It is not an angry voice. It is a sympathetic, loving, caring voice.

Why do you persecute me? Don't you know that what you're doing is hurting yourself? We know that in the old days, when people were farming, they used a horse or an ox to till the ground. And they put the horse or ox under a yoke. And the farmer would guide that yoke, so that the farrow that was made would be straight.

But you know, an ox or a horse has its own way. It wants to go to the left and to the right. Maybe it sees, saw something that was good for food.

And in doing that, he was going in a zigzagging way. So the farmer tried to bring him back, bring it back. And in the hand of the farmer, there was a sharp instrument called the gourd.

And he would use that sharp instrument to touch the leg of the animal, just to remind him, remind the horse or the ox that he has a master, that he is doing his master's work. He cannot go his own way. And if he's going on his own way, he will be hurt.

But of course, the farmer would touch him very lightly, because the farmer would not like to hurt the animal. But the animal was so wild, it kicks against the gourd. And in kicking it, it hurts.

And after a few times, even an animal will learn to be obedient, knowing that it has a master. Now, dear brothers and sisters and friends, when we came into this world, we do not come by ourselves. God gave us life.

He has a purpose to each one of us. He is our master. We are sent into this world to do his errand.

We are not our own. But unfortunately, we do not know. We try to go our own way.

And in doing that, God will remind us, gently touch us, with some circumstance, with something to remind us that we are not our own. We have a master. We come to do the work of God, to fulfill his purpose, and not our own.

That is what life is really for. And oftentimes, how we kick against the gourd, against our conscience, have not our conscience spoken to us once, twice, three times, many times, reminding us what life is really for. But we all be banished.

If we continue to kick, we hurt ourselves. But if we listen, then, thank God, we do the job. So, dear brothers and sisters, this young man, he heard this voice.

Do not hurt yourself. Be understandable. Be submissive.

Do what you are sent for. Then your life will be full and blessed. And thank God, this vision on Damascus Road opened the eyes of this young man.

He was trying to build up his own righteousness. So that one day when he shall stand before God, he can pass. But on that day, the Lord shows him, his righteousnesses are as filthy wrecks.

They do not cover his nakedness. They only deceive him and will eventually destroy him. And God, who is merciful, look upon him, rescue him, turn him around, and set him on the right track with the right goal.

So this young man, after he had heard this voice and understood, he saw that vision. It is not himself. It is Christ.

Even though he was religious, pious, and yet he was self-centered. He was trying to build up himself. And dear friends, dear brothers and sisters, that's what all we are doing.

We are trying to build up ourselves. Some people are trying to build up themselves for this short time of life. Other people may be wiser.

Listen to the advice of Solomon and try to fear God, keep his commandments, building ourselves up for eternity. But even that, we got the wrong mark, the wrong goal. And it will lead us to the wrong end.

So he looked upon us and turned us away from ourselves and turned to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. So dear brothers and sisters, we are all pursuing, we are running, we are all seeking, but what is our goal? What is the target? What is the mark that we want to arrive at? I think this is the most important thing in our whole life. If we choose the wrong target, our life is a waste.

More than a waste, it's a loss for eternity. So it is most important for each and every one of us that we catch the heavenly vision. We need to see Christ Jesus.

If we see him, we will see the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And we will be able to count all things but loss, even filth, in order to know him. But some people may ask the question, is there any need for us to pursue after Christ? Is it not true that it is not we who pursue him? It is he who pursues us.

When we were yet sinners, lost sheep, how God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus, to us. He came into this world to be a man among us, in order to save us. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God.

He sought us. We are like that lost sheep in the mountain, and our Good Shepherd came to seek us. And he found us, and he took us, brought us on his shoulder, bring us back to the Father's home.

Dear brothers and sisters, is it not our own experience? He calls us. All who labor and are heavy laden, come to me, and I will give you rest. But dear brothers and sisters, this is only the beginning.

Why is it so? Now, if our goal is a dead thing, then you can pursue it, and when you got it, that's it, that's all. But remember that our goal is a living person. It is Christ Jesus.

Now, who is Christ Jesus? If you read the Bible, you will find that he's more than our Savior. He is our Lord. The Bible tells us, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily.

In other words, whatever God is, that is Christ the Son. All the character of God, his love, his righteousness, his holiness, his perfection, his purity, his power, his all-wise knowledge, his all-presence everywhere, all the attributes, all the character, everything that you can think of God dwells in Christ bodily. We can simply say, when God gave his Son to us, he has given us everything.

If you want to ask God for any other thing, God said, go to my Son. I have nothing else. It's all there.

It is through the Son that all the fullness of the Godhead are made available to us. This is what Christ is. He is the infinite one.

And if you set the goal, the mark on him, if you want to know him, to win him, dear brothers and sisters, there is no end. Not only in this life, but even in the life afterwards. We are always pursuing after him, because he is all and all to us.

So, dear brothers and sisters, we do praise and thank the Lord that for us who believe in the Lord Jesus, we have set our goal straight. We know where we are going, we know what we are pursuing, and we know there is no end. More and more we will come to know him.

And to know him is life and life abundant. So, what a joy that we who have believed in the Lord Jesus and who are now pursuing after him, how blessed our life is. Now, the Bible tells us that we are always pursuing.

We are always running. If you take 1 Corinthians, say, chapter 9, you find the Apostle Paul tells us that we are running. Running to win.

We are combating. We are fighting for that crown, for that reward. And Philippians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul himself tells us.

No, you know, after he has seen the heavenly vision, he became Paul, which means little. You know, before he knew the Lord, he was Saul. And Saul means, asked for.

He was the person that everybody are asking for. But now, after he had knew the Lord, known the Lord, he became Paul, which means little. He is little, but Christ is big.

And even after he have served the Lord so faithfully for years, he said, I do not say that I have arrived. I forget what is behind me and pressing on, stretching out myself to that which is before me. All I desire to get is what he has possessed me, that I may possess.

All that he has possessed me, I pursue. So dear brothers and sisters, whether you have believed in the Lord Jesus just now, recently, or whether you have believed in the Lord Jesus for decades, there is no let up. Pursuing.

We are still pursuing because there's always something over, something more, more excellency, excellent, more glorious of our Lord Jesus that we may come to possess. Now, how do we pursue? The very word pursue is an active word. You know, when you think of the word pursue, it means that it is not just walking, leisurely, take your time, looking here and there, loitering around.

No. Pursue means you put yourself diligently into it. It is not casual in any way.

It is not easy. Take it easy. You know, dear brothers and sisters, sometimes we say, after we believe in the Lord Jesus, we think that now everything is rosy.

So what should we do after we believe in the Lord Jesus? We are just sitting in that and be carried all the way to heaven. That Christianity. That is the Christianity that people are hoping for.

But it's a mirage. It's not true. Because pursuing is an active word.

We are running an obstacle course. The way is not easy. Why? Because we are running against the current of this world.

That's why the Bible sometimes say, it is a fight. We have to fight the good fight. We have lots of obstacles, lots of difficulties.

We are not hoping to be carried easily into heaven. But we are prepared to fight the good fight of faith. That's what we need to do.

We Christians are too lazy. We are not diligent enough. The Bible tells us, be diligent.

After you have faith, you add to it virtue. And so on and so forth. That you're entering into the kingdom, maybe with abundance.

We have to make our calling sure. This is Christian life. The Lord calls us.

Take my yoke upon you. And learn of me. For I am meek and lowly in heart.

And you shall find rest in your soul. My burden is light. Brothers and sisters, when our Lord Jesus was on this earth, did he live a very comfortable, easy, so-called prosperous life? Not at all.

Just the opposite. Think of our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, coming into this world to live a human life. And how did he live? He walked the way of the cross.

He bore the cross throughout his life, denying himself. He wouldn't do anything, say anything out of himself, even though he was almighty. But in all things, he was obedient to the Father who sent him.

He bore the cross throughout his life, until he was crucified on it. But God has highly exalted him and has given him a name that is above every name. And by that name, every name, every tongue shall confess Jesus is Lord.

And every knee shall bow to him, to the glory of God. So, dear brothers and sisters, we need to pursue one thing we have to remember. We are now in the 21st century.

Even in the first century, before our Lord Jesus returned to heaven, he promised us he is coming. Every century, every generation, those who love the Lord, they are waiting for his return. They are not wrong, because the Lord can return at any time.

But why? Why is it that he waited and waited and waited until now? Because the bride is not ready. We are to be his bride. Are we ready for him? Are we pursuing him? Are we pursuing other things than our Lord Jesus? Are we willing to count all things but dross, filth, something we turn ourselves away, because we have seen the Lord? This is the way to prepare ourselves.

This is a way to spend our life. And dear brothers and sisters, there is very little time left. We must pursue and pursue with passion.

Now, what is passion? We are not talking about the passion and lust of the flesh. You remember in Galatians chapter 6, there is the passion and lust of the flesh. Chapter 5, in our flesh there is a passion.

Lots of so-called love is just passion and lust. We cannot pursue the Lord with the lust and passion of our flesh. On the contrary, we know that our old man, our flesh, and his lust and passion have been crucified with Christ.

But yet we need to pursue after the Lord with passion. So what kind of a passion is that? It is not the passion out of our own flesh. You know that young man Saul, he persecuted the Christians with passion, zeal, but he was wrong.

He was doing the very opposite. That has to be crucified. We have to deny ourselves, and take up the cross, and follow the Lord.

But what is the passion that we are talking about? In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 14, the love of Christ constrains us. Knowing that when we die for all, then all die, and we who live no longer live for ourselves, but for him who lived and died for us. Romans 12, verse 1, by the mercies of God, I beseech you to present your bodies as living sacrifice, holy acceptable God, which is your reasonable worship and service.

Now that's the passion. In other words, it is the love of Christ who constrains us. Dear brothers and sisters, we need to see the glory of the Lord.

Not only when we first believe in him, we see his beauty. The beauty of the crucified one. He melts our heart.

He won our heart, and we gave ourselves to him. But all along the way, brothers and sisters, we need to see more and more of his excellency, of his beauty, of his love, of his greatness. Abraham, when the glory of the Lord, the Lord of glory appeared to him, by faith, he went out, leaving everything behind, and going where he led.

Brothers and sisters, this is passion. Has our passion waned? Cold? Is our pursuing slowing down, almost to a standstill? Or is it going backward? May the Spirit of the Lord search our hearts, prove us deeply, touch us again with his love. And for the love of our Lord Jesus, brothers and sisters, let us pursue him with passion.

Our dear brother, in our mention of our Zinzendorf, Count Zinzendorf was a noble. He was trained as a nobility. That was in the 18th century.

And after he was trained from the university, it was the custom of that time for royalty to travel around Europe, to learn more of the culture of the time. So this young man, Count Zinzendorf, went to Paris. Paris was a place that attracted young people.

But to Zinzendorf, there was no attraction. He has already forfeited the world and his pleasure. But one day, when he traveled to Zinzendorf, he visited a museum, an art museum.

He saw a picture, a painting, drawn by an artist who turned to the Lord by a gypsy girl when she was drawing her. And out of his most love towards the Lord, he painted a head, supposed to be representing the Lord. He gave it as his gift to the museum.

And every day he went to the museum, hiding backwards, seeing if anybody was looking at that picture, and he prayed. One day, this young man, Zinzendorf, visited the museum. He looked at this picture.

He was transfixed. Under the picture there was a sentence, I have done all this for you. What have you done for me? Zinzendorf looked at this picture.

He could not leave. The museum was to be closed. So the guardian touched his shoulder, said, it's time to go.

He went back to his hotel. He gave his life, all over, everything he had, who did so much for him. And we all know the history.

He opened up his domain, welcoming those Christians who were persecuted at that time. Let them settle there. And he devoted his whole life in serving them, bringing them together into unity.

That's the beginning of the Moravian, brothers and sisters, that is pursuing with passion. How about, where are you? May the Spirit of the Lord descend upon everyone of us here, that we may prepare for the return of our blessed beloved Lord. Dear Lord, thou has called us to pursue thee with passion.

Thou has loved us with passion. What passionate love thou has poured out thyself to us, without reservation, without consideration. O Lord, may thy love revive us, touch us, that we may truly be love slaves.

We do not want to go out free. Lord, our life is yours. May thou put thy seal upon each and every one of us.

O, do not let anyone to the praise of thy glory. In thy precious name, the blessed name, we pray. Amen.

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