Relieving Purpose Anxiety

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John 14

Well good evening everyone, it's good to see you. I want to welcome you here to worship at Christ the King with us. My name is Steven, I am privileged to be the deacon here and it's a great joy for me to be with you to sing God's praises, to partake in the table and to open the scriptures to listen to what God has to say to us this evening.

So this evening we're continuing our series in John 14 and it's centered on John 14:1 where Jesus gave that direction to his disciples to let not their hearts be worried or troubled; believe in God, believe also in me.

And over the last two weeks , Jesse has expounded two reasons from John 14 that Jesus gave that their heart should not be troubled. The first reason was that Jesus was going to prepare a place for them; it was a place that their hearts had been designed for, it was a place of ultimate security, it was an eternal dwelling place that only satisfied what C.S. Lewis called the inconsolable longing.

And the second reason was when it was Phillip who asked or it was Thomas who asked how could they know the way that Jesus was going. Jesus said to them, "I am the way the truth and the life," so their hearts did not need to be troubled because the way the truth and the life was a person and they knew that person, that person was Jesus.

And so this evening we're going to explore another way or another reason that Jesus gives them to let not their hearts be troubled. He's going to say essentially that they need not be troubled because they're going to have a purpose in life; they're going to have a calling, that calling will be to do the works that Jesus did and even greater works than he did. They were going to have a purpose.

Have you ever asked yourself if there is a purpose for your life? Maybe this is not even an occasional question for you but maybe it's a nagging constant agitation at the back of your mind, maybe an endless loop of questions asking "What is the point of my life am I doing what I'm supposed to be doing is is this all there is what if I meant to be doing something bigger and I'm missing it or am I wasting my time am I just going through the motions getting by day to day with not much to show for it".

You know these feelings can be spiritual too, especially if you're searching for a purpose and it's an endless search you're not coming up with the answer. It can sound sometimes or it can feel

sometimes like God is silent, he's not talking to you or somehow you've missed his plan for your life.

Well this feeling, it's a real thing; psychologists call it “purpose anxiety”, it's the tension and frustration that can come when you're searching for a purpose in life and you just seem like it's endless the search is not successful. A low sense of purpose is linked to increased levels of stress and anxiety in life and there's this billion-doll industry called the self-help industry and it's designed to cure this problem but often it doesn't, often it amplifies the feelings and symptoms of this anxiety.

So this anxiety that you may be feeling, it's the opposite of what Jesus is offering. See Jesus offers us something much better than endless frustrated searching; he invites us into a much gentler, grace-filled way of discovering God's calling on our lives. Instead of striving to man to manufacture it through our own efforts we're invited to receive it as a gift from God. It flows out of trust and connection, it flows out of spirit empowered obedience and out of prayerful communion with God.

Now we're going to look at three considerations this evening from the gospel reading that Jesse did for us and they are these three: they are a command to obey, a calling to embrace, and a conversation to maintain. Before we unpack that let me pray for us.

Lord thank you for this opportunity to expound your word, may the thoughts on my heart and the words of my lips be acceptable in your sight oh Lord my rock and my redeemer. Lord, I ask that if anybody is suffering from especially purpose anxiety but any anxiety in their lives that this evening they would hear a message of God's perfect love his compassion and empathy for them that he is with them through these trials and struggles and that there is a way out of the other side in Jesus name amen.

All right so our three considerations, a command, a calling and a conversation, they come from our text; it's in John 14 verse one and then verses 8-14 if you would like to follow along.

Our first consideration is a command; Jesus in 14:1 says "Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God and believe also in me". And now I want to just geek out a little bit on the grammar that this was written in; the first part of this sentence is called a passive imperative.

See it's an imperative so it's a command, Jesus is telling us to not let our hearts be troubled and I find that to be such good news because Jesus never tells us to do something that we cannot do so we can let our hearts not be troubled. But it's also passive and so it's not really us doing the work which I find more good news because it's Jesus doing the work, he's inviting us to receive an untroubled heart.

Well now what exactly is a troubled heart? What does a troubled heart feel like? I want you to, I know too, I want you to close your eyes and picture a river rafting trip if you've ever been on one. Parts of the river are fast flowing, they're river drops over rocks, the raft it's bouncing up

and down it's bouncing left and right, the river it's all churned up it's agitated it's unsettled. That churning agitation, that is what a troubled heart feels like. Well you're still on the trip then the river, the river comes out of its confined space and it enters this wide open area; no rocks no drops the water's flowing along calmly and smoothly.

Well that's the picture of an untroubled heart. You see the troubled heart's inner emotional or spiritual state of agitation, it's anxious, it's fearful, it's distressful like a class 5 rapid, that is what your heart feels like when you're experiencing this purpose anxiety and that is what Jesus tells us not to let our hearts feel.

But many of us do feel pressure to discover God's call on our life? We search for it as if it's a hidden treasure that we have to frantically dig for, we desperately chase after it hoping one day we will finally discover what it is and that's the very definition of a troubled heart.

See true calling is not first something we do, it's something we receive and walk in by faith. Calling is not a self-discovered path, it's not a personal quest for significance, it flows out of a relationship and a belief. So now why did Jesus tell his disciples to not let their hearts be troubled? What was their heart troubled about? Well they were about to lose Jesus, they were about to have their calling or what they thought their calling was crushed. They thought their calling was going to be following a conquering Messiah; he was going to kick the Romans out and they were going to usher in the kingdom of heaven on earth and they were going to rule.

Well now Jesus didn't respond to their troubled heart by saying "Well you better figure out a new purpose for when I'm gone". He simply says "Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me". See purpose anxiety it thrives when we look inward not upward, Jesus directs us towards something far better in a far better way since it's a peaceful relational way. True calling is not something we frantically manufacture through self-discovery and endless searching, it is received as a gift that flows out of trust in a person, the person of Jesus.

See when Thomas asked in verse 5 "How can we know the way?" Jesus didn't hand him a five-year plan, he said "I am the way the truth and the life". When Phillip asks in verse 8, , "We'd like to see the father," Jesus replied "Phillip if you have seen me you have seen the father". See, our purpose is not some abstract assignment that's dropped from heaven, it's to live in the same intimate union with the father that Jesus modeled for us.

So instead of chasing experiences or the perfect calling we need to anchor our hearts daily in belief. So what Paul says in Philippians 4:6 really applies here, he says "Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your requests known to God".

Now I know this sounds all very warm and fuzzy even for me but how do we actualize this? So there are some simple practices that I would like to recommend that can begin to help us over time calm our anxious hearts and keep them focused on God. So one practice I recommend is that you memorize some scripture: memorize John 14:1 and memorize Philippians 4:6 and

begin your day with them. If memorization isn't your thing, write them on a 3x5 card and place them on your nightstand so that it's the first thing you look at when you get up in the morning.

Another practice I recommend is to limit your exposure to self-help products and doom scrolling on social media. We don't need more self-help, we need more spirit to help the spirit that God promises to send. So replace even 15 to 20 minutes of all that noise that you might have and spend that time abiding in Christ reading scripture or simply abiding in Christ sitting with him as we rest peacefully in relationship with Jesus. Greater works will naturally flow not from striving but by staying connected to the source of the good works. If we do this this will make our search peaceful and relational.

Now I want to share a little story of my own as an example. When I graduated from Denver Seminary I was convinced and Debbie was convinced that we knew exactly what our purpose and calling looked like. So Debbie and I set out on our own really determined search. I began to apply for jobs in churches because I was convinced I was going to be like an executive pastor or something; the one thing I really knew for sure was we were not going to be part of the church plant. I applied for three or four church positions, I even applied for the maintenance guy in a church and every job it wasn't even a no response, it was always no one else got that job.

So we started making plans to move to Florida, I was going to be a handyman, we were going to live somewhere near the beach; we had entirely given up our thoughts but that's the very moment we finally surrendered our plans we stopped striving. We simply obey Jesus's command to not let our hearts be troubled, to believe in God and to believe in Jesus.

And then in God's perfect timing the door opened right here in a church plant, through some unhurried discussions with Jesse, decided that there was a place here for us in a role as a deacon here at Christ the King and and here we are. When we had stopped frantically searching, when we had surrendered, when we had begun to let God have his way and began to be in relationship or deeper relationship with Christ God showed us the work that he had already prepared for us to walk in and that's Christ the King.

And so well that brings us to our second consideration which is a calling to embrace. We are called to join the Holy Spirit in the kingdom work that's still left to do; Jesus says in verse 12 "truly truly I say to you whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do because I am going to the father".

So when Jesus promised that we would do works he did and even greater works, he was not giving them and us some vague motivational speech, he was declaring to us our calling. Jesus is not just talking here to full-time clergy and people who work full-time in ministry, he is talking to all Christians.

This is the same truth, this is the same truth Paul celebrates in Ephesians 2:10 "for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them". That can be that's again so encouraging, the works are prepared

beforehand we don't have to invent them we don't have to we don't have to frantically strive for them we just need to walk in what he has already prepared for us.

Now if you're like me when you read “greater” works your mind immediately goes to all the great things that you know miraculous things that Jesus did; walk on water raise Lazarus feed the 5000, you might be already feeling some stress about how am I going to do that?

Well greater here is not about individual works outshining Jesus. See an easy way to picture what Jesus means is to think about how we use the term the greater Denver metro area. See just as a greater Denver metro area it does not mean a bigger and better Denver in terms of quality intensity, what it rather means an expanded region that includes Denver plus all the surrounding regions. So Jesus's greater works do not mean that individuals will do more impressive or powerful miracles thank goodness than Jesus did. Instead they mean the expanded scope and reach of the same kind of works that Jesus did but now multiplied through his people across the whole world.

So your calling therefore is not to replicate Jesus's three-year ministry, it's to participate in the expansion of his ministry to continue the works that Jesus did on a greater scale. The greater works include everyday faithful acts that multiply the impact of the gospel across generations and communities.

I want to give you one very important work that you can participate with us here at Christ the King we've been talking about in exploring this issue, that is pouring your life into the children that God has given us here at CTK. You see parents obviously your own children that's your primary mission field, raising children to have a deep intimacy with Jesus that is a greater work.

But you know those of you who aren't parents simply showing up consistently for the children around you, that's kingdom work that will echo into eternity. By taking an interest in the children around you you're participating in something far bigger than yourself, you're helping raise the people who will take the gospel into the next generation, that work will outlive you.

You may know that as a church we also support the Whiz Kids ministry that Erin and Ty really coordinate for us. Those volunteers are already participating and impacting children in a profound and life-changing way. See that's one way that the greater works are taking place even today. So you know with the children that's just one way to do greater works, I know that the majority of you are already participating in the greater works, I want to encourage you to continue to do that but I want you to see these works even the little ones as really your calling.

And so that brings us to our final consideration which is a “conversation to maintain”. See Jesus said "Whenever you ask in my name this I will do that the father may be glorified in the son if you ask me anything in my name I will do it". See calling is pursued through prayer in Jesus's name for the Father's glory.

Now this is not a blank check or a magic formula where you just add Jesus's name at the end of a prayer for things you want; Lord I want a Tesla in Jesus name, that is not how it's gonna work.

You see in ancient Israel knowing a person's name was a powerful thing; if you knew a person's name you knew their essence you knew their character you knew their some of their destiny, knowing their name you even had some of their power and authority. So when Jesus says "Pray in my name," he means "Pray in alignment with his character and your prayer needs to reflect who Jesus is".

And this follows from our first consideration that your calling is relational, it is through spending time with Jesus that you come to know him in this intimate way so that you can pray in his name so that he acts so that the father is glorified.

Now this conversation it's two-way; we speak to him, we bring him our confusion, our doubts and then we listen. We listen through scripture and through the Holy Spirit or sometimes through the quiet nudges of daily life. See, the same relationship that calms our hearts in our first consideration now becomes fuel for our calling in the second.

Now I want to tell you another story and this is about prayer conversation. So I consider one of my greater work is to help other people drive as probably the world's foremost driver, I consider it my work to yell at people who are not doing the things they should do while they're driving. And look, I know that this is an area of my life that I really need to work on I need to greatly improve because I get really agitated. I get agitated when people drive down the road like it's a NASCAR race.

Well just the other day I was driving on Broadway and I was talking to Jesus about this area in my life and he was saying "You need to correct it". And I was saying "I know I'm going to try my best with your help". And right after I said that this guy in a Tesla — I'm on Teslas tonight — but this guy in a Tesla passes me in like the breakdown lane on the right and then pulls in front of me across the solid white line cutting me off from traffic and I immediately yelled at him, I yelled to him, I said "What are you thinking you doofus?" And then I heard Jesus say "You asked for my help and I just gave you an opportunity". See I failed the test immediately, but Jesus did he didn't condemn, he just smiled and he invited me back into conversation teaching me to give myself some of the same grace that he gives.

So I want to encourage you if this happens to you, keep praying. Don't stop the conversation even if you don't feel you're getting a response or even if you don't think you respond correctly to the opportunities; keep praying and keep talking. So God's calling it's never going to be self-glorifying, it's always going to be Godword. The same faith that calms our hearts also drives us to pray boldly not for our own fame but so the world sees the father through the son in us. Use prayer as the engine of your calling.

So I wanted to offer just two quick ways to do this: first make this a daily practice, begin your day and end your day with talking to God. I've already talked about scripture on your

nightstand; when you're in the mirror just begin to talk to God about your day. Ask him to be in the plan for your day, ask him to be with you that day and then just before you close your eyes at night take a few minutes to thank God and review the day with him and then ask him to be with you the next day.

The second thing is this: pray for the children of Christ the King.

You don't have to pray for all of them, pray for a short list, I have a short list, talk to their parents and then begin to pray for them. Pray that they would form a deep intimacy with Jesus, an intimacy with that would see them through their adolescence and into their adulthood.

If they're old enough and with their parents' consent you might talk to them about what you can pray for them or what's going on in their life that you might pray for. So in these small steps you will begin to grow more intimate with Jesus yourself and as you do your prayers will fall more in line with his character and mission and you will find yourself truly praying in Jesus name.

Let's pray. *Lord thank you that you give us this profound and powerful tool of praying in your son's name; Lord help us to so align our wills and our character and our desires through our intimate relationship with Jesus that our will and our character would be conformed to his will and his character and that our prayers in his name would truly be in his name and we pray all this in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit come in.*