

Greetings to all those who are on their faith journey,

**SCRIPTURE:**

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) – Larger reading: Jeremiah 29:10-23

*:For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

**STORY:**

Lincoln once attended a camp meeting of a famous evangelist. During the progress of the meeting the preacher said: “All who want to go to heaven stand up.” When Lincoln didn’t stand up, the preacher said: “Do you want to go to hell, Mr. Lincoln?” “No,” smiled the youthful Lincoln, “I want to go to Congress.”

**OBSERVATION:**

Wouldn’t be great if we could just pick up the telephone, dial up heaven and say, “Hey, God, this is old preacher Jim and I just need to know what I am suppose to do now” ... and he would tell us! Or, wouldn’t be great if we could pick up the Bible and open it to the New Testament and find a letter from Paul written specifically to us ... and it would be telling us what our purpose in this life was meant to be? Wouldn’t it be great, but that isn’t how God works.

A few years back I was in dialogue with a young person who was trying to determine his calling. Does God want him to do this or to do that? He was really struggling. That was actually a good thing – to wrestle with God over our purpose and direction. Well, for this young person God has been placing different individuals in his path that are meant to assist him in his search and spiritual journey. But, here is the clinker; this young person wants it only to be a “God thing” – just something between him and God. But that isn’t how God works. God works through people as in ... “his only voice is our voice and his only hands is our hands.”

It is as if there is the huge party being thrown in honor of this young man. He enters the room and says, “No, everybody has got to leave. I only want God to be here.” So they all leave. When God does show up, he looks around and asks, “Where is everybody that I invited to your party?” “I sent them home,” he responds. “Why,” asks God? “Well,” responds the young person, “I want this to be just between you and me.” God slowly begins to shake his head, “Don’t you get it? I invited all these people to your party to speak for me.”

It is like a couple that I was counseling. A major part of the counseling sessions dealt with what God wanted them to do in their life. They were both miserable in their jobs and were trying to discern God’s purpose. Out of the blue, totally unexpected, his brother calls from Las Vegas and states, “All of a sudden, my business has gotten so busy that I cannot handle it any longer without help. I need you both to come out to Las Vegas to help run my company and I need you as soon as you can get here.” Their response, or should I say her response was, “No!” When asked why, she said, “God

doesn't want us to live in Las Vegas." Really ... how else can you explain this invitation to move across the country, with financial assistance to make the move, to two good paying jobs waiting at the other end if it isn't a God-thing? They decided not to take the jobs and they continue to be miserable and as far as I know are still searching for God's purpose in their life.

The "pat" answer in these types of situations is to say, "Pray about it." Prayer is a good thing and can often be a determining factor in discovering ones purpose in life. But, if prayer is just a "you and God" thing then sometimes the answer could be misunderstood. Like the time the church I was serving was discussing the pros and cons of selling the church and moving to a new location. During the congregational meeting one woman, who saw herself to be the spiritual leader of the congregation, stood and said, "I've been praying about this and God has clearly told me that he doesn't want us to sell and move. End of story." She sat down and the majority vote was for the congregation to stay in their existing building. Neither she nor the majority understood my point when I asked, "Well, very good, but who else is God conveying that message to?" It was a sad day for that congregation and a missed opportunity to be about doing God's will. The end of that story is that 13 years later, after the "spiritual leader" had become involved at the Presbyterian Church and there had been some strategic deaths within the congregation, the congregation has voted unanimously to move.

And so, given the gravity of this young persons decision, I've suggested, following the biblical suggestion that "where two or three are gathered together in my name I will be there," that he gather around him a group of prayer warriors to help him discern God's purpose in his life. Will it be easy? No. Will it be fruitful? By all means. Will the answer come quickly? Only time will tell. Will it be important? Yes.

Prayer is important. The other suggestions I've made to him is that he continue his extensive Bible study. Start to journal – writing down ones thought process and ideas can help clarify ones thinking. And, possibly go on a spiritual retreat where all of these disciplines would be followed along with fasting.

We all struggle with our faith journey. We all want and desire clarification when it comes to fulfilling God's purpose in our life. It does start by loving God with our whole being (heart, mind, soul and spirit) and by loving everybody else as we love ourselves ... and then listen. Oh, by the way, the direction that our faith journey should take too often doesn't become clear until we start moving. There might need to be a course correction, but that's okay. At least you have started moving. Have a fantastic faith journey.

**QUOTE:**

*"Discerning and acting on God's will does not mean you'll never have difficult days or feel lousy sometimes. But choosing to live in alignment with God makes you more joyful, compassionate, and peaceful, even on bad days." ~ Debra K. Farrington*

**PRAYER:**

Well, Lord, here goes nothing (as the saying goes) ... I'm off on my faith journey trusting you that will direct my steps. Help me not to get lost in the jungle that I call life.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim  
Jmartin450@tampabay.rr.com  
386-795-5323

***Read eLIFE ... our worship service is now on YouTube as well as Facebook. Instructions have been given as to how you can access our service. And, we will be back in the sanctuary again this Sunday at 10:30. Hope you can safely come and join us.***

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