

Isaiah 42:1-9 *The LORD's Chosen Servant*

I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you;

I will give you as a covenant for the people,

a light for the nations,

to open the eyes that are blind,

to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,

from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Someday, when I grow up, I want to be a firefighter, or an astronaut, or a baseball player.

Someday, when I grow up, I want to be married and have kids and a house with a yard and a dog (not a cat!).

George Bailey from **It's a Wonderful Life** had a dream,

I know what I'm gonna do tomorrow, and the next day, and the next year, and the year after that. I'm shakin' the dust of this crummy little town off my feet and I'm gonna see the world. Italy, Greece, the Parthenon, the Colosseum. Then, I'm comin' back here to go to college and see what they know. And then I'm gonna build things. I'm gonna build airfields, I'm gonna build skyscrapers a hundred stories high, I'm gonna build bridges a mile long...

Mary Hatch, played by Donna Reed, had a different dream. When they spent their wedding night in the broken down, abandoned old house, she confessed to him,

Remember the night we broke the windows in this old house? This is what I wished for.

At the end of the movie they realized their dreams together.

What was your childhood dream?

Paul writes,

1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

Did Paul understand that childhood dreams must give way to reality?

Is he saying that life as a grownup will always be less than what you dreamed of as a child?

Or could it actually be more?

There is a movement afoot that encourages people to write down a **personal mission statement**.

We may be familiar with mission statements.

Here are some examples from the corporate world:

Microsoft.

Our mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.

Southwest Airlines

Dedication to the highest quality of customer service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride and company spirit.

Google.

To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.

The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.

Many churches have mission statements as well. For example:

Celebration Church: ***Leading people to experience a God-First Life.***

Southeast Christian Church: ***Connecting people to Jesus and one another.***

Red Rock Church: ***We exist to make Heaven more crowded.***

Redeemer Lutheran Church:

Gathering- Worshipping- Serving- Sharing Christ!

- What does a personal mission statement look like?
- What's your mission in life — exactly?
- What is it that drives you to get up in the morning?
- What legacy do you want to leave in the world?

These are key questions we all should be asking. Writing a personal mission statement allows us to put our answer in a statement short enough that we can use it to explain our whole life to someone in a brief encounter on an elevator. Because, you know, people are always asking about our purpose in life while we're on an elevator.

To be clear, however, a personal mission statement is not important just so you are not at a loss for words in an elevator.

Rather, it is a way of defining yourself and what you're about. It can help you to define your boundaries, clarifying what you're wired to do and unapologetically leaving out the rest.

It sharpens your focus and guides your decision-making, acting like a compass for your life.

For God's people who follow Christ it is really a statement of **call** — it defines what God has put us on earth to do.

In other words, it answers the question:

“What's your why?”

Jesus' personal mission statement was embedded in him long before he was born in Bethlehem.

In today's text, the first of the “Servant Songs” in Isaiah, God lays out the agenda for the Servant, **“my chosen in whom my soul delights.”**

He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street;

a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;

he will faithfully bring forth justice.

He will not grow faint or be discouraged

till he has established justice in the earth;

I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,

**to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness**

As mission statements go, this one is rather long and complicated. Experts tell us to keep it simple, keep it short, make it pithy.

Let's try to update this one a bit.

He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street;

I will not seek fame!

A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;

I will be gentle!

He will faithfully bring forth justice.

I will be just!

**He will not grow faint or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;**

I will not give up!

I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,

**to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness**

I will reflect God's light!

I will not seek fame!

I will be gentle!

I will be just!

I will not give up.

I will reflect God's light.

That wouldn't be a bad personal mission statement at all.

It sounds a lot like a life well lived!

David Brooks wrote an article titled, ***The moral bucket list***.

It occurred to me that there were two sets of virtues, the résumé virtues and the eulogy virtues.

The résumé virtues are the skills you bring to the marketplace.

The eulogy virtues are the ones that are talked about at your funeral — whether you were kind, brave, honest or faithful. Were you capable of deep love?

We all know that the eulogy virtues are more important than the résumé ones.

But our culture and our educational systems spend more time teaching the skills and strategies you need for career success than the qualities you need to radiate that sort of inner light. Many of us are clearer on how to build an external career than on how to build inner character.

But if you live for external achievement, years pass and the deepest parts of you go unexplored and unstructured.

- You lack a moral vocabulary.
- It is easy to slip into a self-satisfied moral mediocrity.
- You grade yourself on a forgiving curve.
- You figure as long as you are not obviously hurting anybody and people seem to like you, you must be O.K.
- But you live with an unconscious boredom, separated from the deepest meaning of life and the highest moral joys.

That is not the kind of life that God calls us to.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession,

that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

- The Father sent the Son.
- The Son earned salvation for the world and then the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit calls us through the Gospel, enlightens us with God's gifts, sanctifies and keeps us in the one true faith.

As disciples of Jesus, this is our personal mission now.

You've been gifted with skills and abilities by the Holy Spirit.

Your personality reflects the person of Christ.

Your values, dreams and passions are focused on doing the work of the kingdom: spreading the good news of Jesus the light and salvation of the world!

But realize that we are all distinctive individuals called to serve the Lord in our own unique way.

There's an old story of the 19th-century British scientist Thomas Huxley, who got off a train one day at the Dublin station. He was late for an important meeting of a scholarly society. Jumping into the nearest cab, he ordered the coachman, **"Drive fast!"**

With a crack of the whip, the horse was off and running, pulling the cab at a furious pace. Huxley called to the driver: **"Do you know where you're going?"**

The coachman answered with a grin: **"No, I don't know where we're going, but I'm driving very fast."**

Unfortunately, that's the way many of us live.

***Perhaps we need a personal mission statement to tell us
where we ought to be going.***

We have our general orders from God through Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit, but each of us must discover our particular calling, our own personal mission within the mission of God.

What's your why?

Before you continue driving very fast, slow down and consider who you are, in light of whose you are.

Don't live in unconscious boredom!

Seek the deepest meaning of life and the highest moral joys.

Be filled with the light of Jesus.

Radiate that light in you own particular and unique way!