

## ASHLEY WEBER'S SENIOR SERMON

**MESSAGE:** How do you fit into God's picture?

Humans think they have this amazing ability to predict the future. We try to imagine exactly what our perfect life will be like, and we try to make it happen. We spend our entire day, preparing our ideal tomorrow. The tomorrow we think will make us happy. One could say this is all human nature to look forward to the future. It is interesting, however, that our predictions of the future are, as a whole, pretty much are ALWAYS wrong. They say that the average undergrad changes their major between 2-5 times. The average person has a total of 15 different jobs. When the golf coach called me to visit Augie, the first thing I said to her was: where in the world is Sioux Falls? I had never heard of Augustana. After a little chatting, I visited the school, and before I knew it, the path that I did not anticipate, the path to Augustana, turned out to be the right one for me. If you told me on the first day of college that I would not marry my high school boyfriend, I would not become a marine biologist and sail on a boat in the Caribbean for the rest of my life; well I would have said you were crazy. Furthermore, if you told me I would study in Guatemala and Spain, I would perform breast cancer research, and I would even get a B in a class all during my time at Augie, again I would have said no way. What does this mean about life? Well, it is not always a straight path, and we tend to get lost a lot. Purpose is not always clear. Purpose.

Who and what are you living for? Today's scripture is from Mark Chapter eight. The disciples were no exception to misinterpreting purpose. Peter indulged in the glory and honor he would receive by walking with Jesus. He took pleasure in spending eternal life with the Messiah, but he did not realize the struggles that would accompany. Peter could not understand why Jesus had to suffer. Like Peter, we can get so caught up on the final destination, that we miss the whole purpose of our life on Earth. What gets you up in the morning, what fuels your decisions? Sometimes we may find ourselves living to catch breaks, skip corners, take shortcuts, make money, and just be able to say we did it all. We make Peter's mistake of chasing earthly pursuits. I'll admit it; often times I do plan my days and my tomorrows to serve my own desires. It is easy to paint our own picture in life, but that isn't in God's plan. In today's scripture we are reminded us to stop and remember WHO exactly we are serving. Is it God or is it yourself? Jesus says to Peter and the disciples, "If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will find true life". God is telling us that you must listen to Him in order to walk with him. The truth is, we are on Earth because of God. As a servant of God, we must consider rather, how do we fit into HIS picture? Being a Christian is hard, but God does not ask us to suffer like Jesus did. Instead, we are asked to give up our self serving tendencies. We as

Christians are called to live like Christ and share the Good News. We are here to serve God and humanity, not ourselves.

God has a plan and has laid out specific directions for how to live in accordance to his will. However, it is hard to understand where God wants to specifically use us. Furthermore, it is hard to listen when your mind is already made up. It is hard to listen if you are not willing to obey. The beautiful part is that God is ready. He provides us with all of the materials to paint HIS picture.

Jesus is saying to his disciples: do not try to fit God into your life. Fit your life into God's. As you put trust in God, God puts his trust in you and begins to use you. As you listen, your path becomes clear. Last year I lived in Sevilla, Spain. One day, I was hustling down the streets of Sevilla where I had been living for several months. As a tall blonde American, I became accustomed to ignoring the eyes and whistles of the forward Spanish culture. I was on my way to a tour of the world-renowned gothic Cathedral when I suddenly heard fear and panic in the Spanish voices around me. I encountered a fellow American woman seizing on the cobblestone streets. There were seven adults around her, all screaming in Spanish for help, but no one could communicate effectively. Instinct and adrenaline kicked in as I immediately directed them in Spanish to call an ambulance. After her seizure had ended and best I knew how, I wiped the blood from her face, turned her on her side, and tried to calm the surrounding commotion. I was the link between two worlds that could not communicate under such intensity. I used her phone to call the last person she spoke to and figured out her name. Finally conscious, she looked at me with confusion but reassurance. I cannot imagine how scary it would be to have a seizure in Spain, let alone on a street with a bunch of people speaking another language around me. As she was escorted into the ambulance she mumbled to me, dazed but very genuine, "Thank you." She will never know who I was, but I will never forget her. It is a defining moment like this that allows all of one's passions and gifts to align and speak of the intended and personal vocation from God. To me, I knew at that moment that I belonged in healthcare. There is an amazing sense of freedom that comes with trusting and listening to God. To me it feels like an unexplainable pull. In May, I will return to Guatemala for, who knows how long, to volunteer in a health clinic. The path is different than planned, but it is richer and purposeful. God really does know best after all.

It is God we are painting for, and it is God's picture, not our own. Wednesday marked the start of Lent. It is during this season that we as Christians turn inward and evaluate our thoughts, words, and actions. Then, we are called to listen and obey. Who exactly are you serving on a daily basis? Now is a perfect opportunity to redirect your vision from the future to present, from yourself to God and humanity. Listen to the way God is guiding you and using you to paint his beautiful and perfect picture.