

This sermon was delivered by Alexander Birkel on Youth Sunday, March 30, 2014 at Princeton United Methodist Church.

that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life". But I know that time after time, I have taken that passage for granted. No matter how you interpret the passage, there is such a degree of sacrificial and live-giving love that is so unequalled in the world, it begins to make you wonder what the point, the meaning of life is.

As a child, I was always exposed to the Christian religion. I was taught to say the same prayer night after night without much reflection, was instructed to give a quick, five second grace at the dinner table, and was brought to church for a one hour Sunday School service weekly. All of this continued from the young age of 8 all the way up until about two years ago, when I abandoned trying to force myself into the Lord's heart, but instead allowed him to fill mine.

In the winter of my sophomore year, I could be seen spending almost every day of the week working out in my basement. And that's how I found Him. Strange, you think, huh? Well, let me tell you, the Lord works in mysterious ways. While exercising, I had only three real choices of television during the five o'clock hour: the news, soap operas from who-knows-when, and a number of comedy shows on TBS and BET. Naturally, I chose the last option, seeking something to fill that empty part of me with laughter. But little did I know that it would be filled with the Lord's warmth and love; because each and every comedy show that I watched that winter had messages and themes of the Lord in it.

Gradually, I began to make a number of changes in my life, some even subconsciously. Instead of listening to whatever Top 40 songs were on while showering, I found myself embracing the warmth and power of Gospel music, loving how it made me feel whole and loved. I began to dust off that Bible that we got in third grade and decided to incorporate the readings of Mark or John in my life rather than Mark Zuckerberg or Jon Stewart. And boy, did I changed the way I prayed. I wouldn't even call it praying anymore, there weren't any more set and strict little four line prayers. I began to have conversations with God. I began to not only accept, but to appreciate I'm sure we're all familiar with the verse John 3:16, that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son and love that there was a reason that Jesus sacrificed Himself for us. Because we all know that He died for us, but I found out that year that He died to give my life meaning. To allow me to love the Lord just as He loves me.

And that's the greatest action that we as human beings can do, is love. Love your neighbor, love yourself, and love the Lord. As one of the songs I heard said, "You don't have to wait until the twelve o' clock to praise Him". The Lord isn't just with you on Sunday at 9:30 or 11:00, He's with you every minute of every day of your life, and the least that I can do is devote my love to Him and His children as well.

All of this time, I knew I was lost and was constantly trying to find something. But I learned that you can't just wish yourself to find something, nor exert yourself into being found, but allow

yourself to be found. Allow yourself to find the Lord just as He finds you. In these past few years, the most important thing I have found in my life is meaning. Never has something so simple in life been taken for granted so much. Sometimes we get so caught up in wanting to believe in something, we lose sight of the actual significance of that thing.

I would like to thank everybody in this church for helping me to find meaning in my life, in my spirituality, and also I would like to call on everybody in this church, whether spiritually strong or still searching, to add meaning to your love for Him, to dedicate your all to Him, because we will forever be in debt of the great sacrifices that the Lord has made for us.