

What Are You Living For?

Matthew 16:13-20, 24-27

PW Emerson – 01/12/2020 – Ten:27 Ministries

The beginning of the new year, I like to take a few weeks and look at big questions, thoughts to help set us on the right track for the new year.

Matthew 16:13-30, 24-27

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

²⁴Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

As you meet someone new, one of the common questions asked is, “What do you do for a living?”

- Computer Consultant
- Teacher
- Lawyer
- Doctor
- Plumber
- Electrician

Everyone here can answer that question. It’s not hard.

Some may say

- In transition
- Student

We all do something.

That’s usually how we earn a living, how we pay the bills.

BUT

It’s a very different question to ask, “What Are You Living For?”

That’s an important question we should all ask of ourselves

- Some people live for money.
- Some people live for fame.
- Some people live for approval.
- Some people live for gratification
- Some people live for love

What are you living for?

When today's piece from Matthew 16 takes place ...

- The area had been buzzing about this person Jesus
- Jesus has a wide following around the common people
- Among the rich or powerful, opinion is turning against him

With this backdrop, Jesus gathers his disciples and asks, "Who do people say that I am?"

Then he asks Peter, "Who do you say that I am?"

Peter responds, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God."

Jesus is pleased with this answer. Jesus is thrilled!

Jesus said, Matthew 16:17

¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

Then Jesus goes on to talk about Peter building the church

Jesus, talking to his disciples, goes on to say, now that you know who I am, are you ready to take up your cross and follow me?

Matthew 16:24-27

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forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

Having acknowledged that Jesus is God, will you take up a cross and follow Jesus?
Or will you serve something else in this world?

It is asking the question, what are you living for?

Bob Dylan wrote ...

“You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody.”

We're not asking what you do for a living, rather what are you living for?

Look at Jesus from a career perspective ...

- He was born in an obscure village in an out-of-the-way province of the Roman Empire.
- He never went to college, nor did he have any professional training.
- He never had a bank account.
- He owned no property except the clothes on his back.
- He never held public office.
- He never wrote a book.
- He never had a wife or children.
- His closest friends were blue-collar workers.
- He felt at home among the outcasts of society.

- His ministry consisted of preaching in the countryside, teaching in the synagogues, answering difficult questions, healing the sick, and casting out demons.
- His opponents openly accused him of consorting with the devil.
- Along the way, he made many powerful enemies by exposing corruption in high places.
- Finally, his adversaries captured him, tried him in a kangaroo court, and put him to death.

From a career perspective, he doesn't look that good.

By modern standards, we would be considered a failure.

But ... if we would at the life of Jesus from the perspective and what was he living for

- He spread words of love, grace and mercy
- He was more concerned with doing what was right than what was expected or what was popular
- He cared greatly for people
- He lived out the importance of inclusion for all
- He showed that each person is important and that no one should be left behind.

And if we ask ourselves, how is he remembered now? We see that

- His words are remembered and repeated around the world.
- His followers number in the billions and can be found in every country on earth.
- His personal integrity stands unsullied amidst the attacks of the cynics and the sneers of the ignorant.
- His death, which seemed to be a tragedy, has become the means by which we can be reconciled to God.

- His whole mission on earth, which seemed to be a failure, has now become history's greatest success story.

And it wasn't by his career. It was by what he was living for!

Jesus expresses the importance in John 12:24

²⁴Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

Out of one seed comes forth a harvest; but that seed must die in order to bring forth its fruit

As long as the seed "saves" its life, it remains alone. But when it "loses" its life, it brings forth the harvest.

If you try to "save" your life, in the end you "lose" it. But if you dare to "lose" it for Jesus' sake, in the end you "save" it.

That's way the very next verse, John 12:25

²⁵Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

The apostle Paul stresses this in Romans 6:8

⁸Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

And Jesus is the supreme example of this notion.

Another way of looking at this is to ask yourself ... if your life a career or a mission?

The Bible never talks about having a career – that word doesn't appear in the bible.

Having a career is not a biblical issue.

The people of this world live for their careers.

The people of heaven don't. They/We live for God!

When asked, "What do you do for a living?" The answer is your career.

When asked, "What are you living for?" The answer is your mission.

If you are just here to eat, sleep, go to college, get a degree, get married, get a job, have some children, climb the ladder, make some money, buy a summer home, retire gracefully, grow old and die, then what's the big deal?

All of that is okay, but if that's all there is to life, then you are really no different from the pagans who don't even believe in God.

It's nice to have a career.

It's far better to be on a mission for God.

Jesus calls his followers to be totally sold out to his kingdom. That applies to all Christians all the time, not just to "full-time Christian workers" such as pastors or missionaries.

Suppose you are an electrical engineer or an attorney. Here is God's job description for you:

- You are a missionary cleverly disguised as an engineer.
- You are a missionary cleverly disguised as an attorney.

It's nice to have a career.

It's far better to be on a mission for God.

Consider writing a mission statement for you, for your life.

Then keep that in clear focus!

I read about the story of Robert Jaffray of Canada. He came from a wealthy family and in fact was heir to a large newspaper fortune in Toronto. When he was a young man, he learned the Chinese language and was offered a large salary by Standard Oil of New York if he would forego his missionary career and work for them.

He refused, so they doubled their salary offer.

He refused again.

They cabled him with this message: "Robert Jaffray. At any cost."

He cabled back, "Your salary is big. Your job is too small."

He spent 35 years as a missionary in China and helped translate the Bible into Cantonese.

There are a number of churches with a sign over the door, to be read when you leave the building. It says "NOW ENTERING THE MISSION FIELD"

Or in one case there is the same text on a road sign when leaving the church parking lot.

There is a popular phrase in the culture, in society, "You can't take it with you" referring to your money when you die.

The same thing applies to your time, your abilities, and your efforts.

You can only use them in this life, here on earth.

In November of 2017, David Cassidy died at the age of 67. He is remembered for his role in the 1970s sitcom "The Partridge Family." According to his daughter Katie, his last words were, "So much wasted time."

I think that's the fear of many people:

That we will come to the end and look back with regret.

That we will come to the end and realize we wasted our one and only life.

Sooner or later we all come to the end of our earthly journey.

Benjamin E. Mays wrote:

I have just one minute
Only sixty seconds in it,
Forced upon me—can't refuse it
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it,
But it's up to me to use it.
I must suffer if I lose it,
Give account if I abuse it.
Just a tiny little minute—
But eternity is in it.

Use each of your minutes wisely.

CONCLUSION

The questions posed by Jesus ...

- Who do people say that I am?
- Who do you say that I am?

Were posed to Peter, with all the disciples present.

It is no less a question for each of the disciples.

It is no less a question for each of us.

At the beginning I asked the questions ...

- What do you do for a living? Most of us can answer that question easily.
- What are you living for? That's a harder question.

But it's an important question, one worth asking.

This year have a mission!