

## **1-31-21 Unity Service**

Sermon- Short Timers

Scripture- 1 Corinthians 7:29-35, CTW PS 62: 5-12

Hymns- 584, 147, 433

Theme- In the passage from first Corinthians today, Paul calls all believers to change their attitude about life and the call which God has placed upon it. For Christians, the call is never to be far from their vision and planning on a daily basis. I believe that the recent Pandemic has made the truth of that statement very real for all of us. The lessons learned can change us for good...but will we allow it?

### **I. Introduction:**

In one scene of the popular movie Robin Hood, The Prince of Thieves, Kevin Costner as Robin comes to a young man taking aim at an archery target. Robin asks, "Can you shoot amid distractions?"

Just before the boy releases the string, Robin pokes his ear with the feathers of an arrow. The boy's shot flies high by several feet.

After the laughter of those watching dies down, Maid Marian, standing behind the boy, asks Robin, "Can you?"

Robin Hood raises his bow and takes aim. Just as he releases the arrow, Maid Marian leans beside him and flirtatiously blows into his face. The arrow misses the target, glances off the tree behind it, and scarcely misses a bystander.

Distractions come in all types, and whether they are painful or pleasant, the result is the same: we miss God's mark.

**A. It is hard to remain focused isn't it? Life for many of us consists of rabbit trails rather than highways.**

We are always on the move, but not really getting anywhere. The distractions of life dictate our decisions and control our schedules. We make a lot of plans, but get very little done.

The problem is that it all seems important, or at least necessary. Our lives are filled with the urgent, and we have no time for the eternal.

We have tended to a million little things and left undone the big things. We have filled the day with things that do not ultimately matter and left undone the things that do matter.

We have done what seemed necessary and neglected what was essential.

Days turn into months and months into years, and our lives have become trivialized by distractions.

We are busy people, aren't we?

**B. We are looking at 1 Corinthians this morning and Paul addresses the issue of not being distracted in our service to God.** His primary message is that we should not get so involved in the Earthly that we forget the eternal.

If you will remember, in 1 Corinthians, Paul is answering some questions that the new believers in Corinth had about various things.

The first question was about Christian marriage.

Paul continues those thoughts on into chapter 7 here and then close to the end starting in verse 29, he tells us what the marriage and family relationships should like in regard to our faith.

This is a letter of correction and can hit us pretty hard. This scripture this morning will challenge us and our dedication to God.

**II. The first thing we see here is that we should not get so caught up in something that keeps us from serving God.**

Paul proceeds to give us a list of the things we should not be so caught up in:

**A. The First of These Concerns is Family**

You might respond: "Wait a minute Pastor, my family is the most important thing in my life!"

Paul understands that family is oh so important, but look at verse 29 again:

“But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage.”

Paul does not say that we should not focus on our family. He says that our faith needs to be our focus also.

We all have family responsibilities. That's what determines if we are a good father or good mother. It is important how we handle the responsibilities that come with these relationships.

What Paul is telling us is that yes there are **familial** responsibilities but there are also **eternal** responsibilities that govern how we approach all of it. If you are not passionate about having your family be in Christ, then rearrange your priorities.

In her book, *A Practical Guide to Prayer*, Dorothy Haskins tells about a noted concert violinist who was asked about the secret of her mastery of the instrument.

She said, “There are many things that used to demand my time. When I went to my room after breakfast, I made my bed, straightened the room, dusted, and did whatever seemed necessary. When I finished my work, I turned to my violin practice. That system prevented me from accomplishing what I should on the violin. So I reversed things. I deliberately planned to neglect everything else until my practice period was complete. And that **program of planned neglect** is the secret to my success.”

I'm not advocating neglecting your family or your responsibilities but I wonder what would happen in your life if before you commit all of your time and energy every day to your family responsibilities, you set aside some time for your other responsibilities as a Christian... **What if you set aside some time for God?**

**Is God THE Focal Point of your Life?**

Paul is saying that we should not get so focused and distracted on the things that come along with marriage that we neglect to focus on our relationship with God.

Folks, we can't let our responsibilities in life overshadow our relationship and our responsibilities to God.

We must be dedicated to both our marriage and family but we also must be dedicated to our God.

### **B. The Next Distraction Is What I Will Refer To As FINITE THINGS**

We all like STUFF don't we? Staying home so much has caused us to look at and reevaluate our stuff. News reports say that during the Pandemic, Amazon, UPS, and FEDEX are busier than they have ever been!

However, look at verse 30 again:

30 Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions.

We should not be absorbed by the joy of our possessions.

We cannot let earthly things, ie possessions, cause us to be distracted from or lose our focus on the eternal.

The reality is that possessions are earthly, they will go away, but our relationship with God is eternal.

We are not to be distracted from God through our possessions.

He who dies with the most toys wins right?

That's what Paul is writing about. we can't rejoice over our possessions to a point that they distract us from God.

When things become more important than God. then they have taken God's place and they are now effectively our god.

We all stock up on stuff, don't we?

It's hard for me to point fingers about having stuff with all the toys and hobbies that I have. You name it and I have it. I even have books about my hobby stuff...cast iron cookware collection, fishing gear, hunting gear, golf stuff, a motorcycle, and a partridge in a pear tree...

The hard reality of all this is that if I am not careful, these things can get in the way of my service and worship of God.

We have the tendency place our favorite things, our "special interest possessions" above what God has called me to do.

That's just a small example but I believe that many Christians today allow things to get in the way of being the Christian that God wants them to be.

You see, we get caught up in the Earthly and God becomes second or third or fourth place in our lives.

It's hard to imagine that when Paul was writing to the Corinthian Christians that they had a lot of stuff. But obviously they did.

I believe that Paul was writing through God's inspiration to us as much as anybody because God knew that our love of stuff would one day become a problem.

Not only can family responsibilities and finite things come between us and God but something else can also come between us and God.

**C. The third great distraction is closely related to the Second: FUN and the pursuit of Happiness.**

. Look at verse 31 again:

31 Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away.

There you go Paul, validating the stereotype that Christians cannot have fun.

But wait a minute, I'm not saying that and neither is Paul.

We all have things that we enjoy. Things we have fun doing. It is said that it gives God joy to see his people being joyous.

Family stuff, fishing with the kids, picnic's, ball games with kids or grandkids.

We enjoy our toys don't we? This is the stuff that we need to buy to have fun with. You like to be on the water? Get a boat. Then the kids want to have more fun so you buy inner tubes and skis, and paddle boards, and a bigger motor to pull it all with and a

canopy to sit under while you watch those kids having fun, and of course a bigger cooler for all the food and an onboard music system for your favorite tunes...it goes on and on. My father in law often reminds me that the two happiest days in a boat owner's life are the day he buys it and the day he sells it!

Paul is telling us however that there is absolutely nothing wrong with any of that until we become so attached to it that it gets in the way of our relationship and our service to God.

I enjoy fun as much as the next person.

If I am not careful though, I will let my attachment to those things get in the way of my relationship and my service to the God who loved me so much that He came and died for me.

You see, we all could get so consumed and involved with the Earthly that we let the Eternal fall to the wayside.

### **III. In Conclusion, Paul sums all of this up for us in verse 35 when he writes this:**

35 I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.

Paul writes that we are free to do what we choose, there are no restrictions placed on you as a Christian but be careful that you do not fall prey to the distractions he just wrote to them and to us about.

**A. Don't let the Earthly become more important to you than the Eternal folks.** So, in conclusion we all need to ask ourselves:

1. What is the most important thing in your life? I hope that it is your relationship with God.

2. If your answer is God, then does the way you live reflect what your answer is?

3. Have you slipped away from that relationship with God? He is waiting on you to come back. **May God bless you as you continue to strive to walk worthy of His calling. AMEN?**