

Luke 12.13-21

Priorities for life.

with reference to Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23 & Colossians 3: 1-11.

Aug 2019

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23

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¹⁸ I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to those who come after me ¹⁹ - and who knows whether they will be wise or foolish? Yet they will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. ²⁰ So I turned and gave my heart up to despair concerning all the toil of my labors under the sun, ²¹ because sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. ²² What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? ²³ For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity.

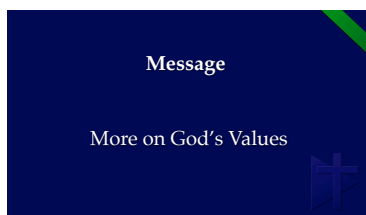
Colossians 3:1-11

¹ So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, ³ for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. ⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. ⁷ These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. ⁸ But now you must get rid of all such things--anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. ¹¹ In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

Luke 12.13-21

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." ¹⁴ But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." ¹⁶ Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷ And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' ¹⁸ Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Intro:



Two weeks ago I preached on 'Good, Better, Best'.
Do you remember? *Y/N*??

Today's readings are again about what we value as the source of life.

This is not surprising.

The Bible is the book of life.

It's all about what life is and how it is to be lived.

The basic message I read through the Bible is:

➤ Life is from God.
➤ Life without God is not complete and will end badly.
➤ God gives his life to us in Jesus.
so
➤ Come to Jesus to receive his life and learn from him
how to live as God's child.
and believe in hope that:
➤ The best is yet to come!

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so
- Come to Jesus to receive his life and learn from him how to live as God's child. (= yoke)

and believe in hope that:

- The best is yet to come.

If you can grasp all that, you have got it and I can stop preaching to you!

A lot of the Bible is about what happens when life goes wrong and what it takes to make life go right.

Today's readings are about the first 3 points of this outline:

- Life is from God.
- Life without God is not complete and will end badly.
- God gives his life to us in Jesus.

Text: Colossians 3

So Paul writes a letter to his believer friends in Colossae to remind them that life is from God and real life -a life that can be lived and is eternal, a life worth living- is in Jesus Christ.

He has to say this because those people lived in a world like ours that tries to convince us as to what real life is and where to buy it.

Aside to teenagers.

When I was a teenager Coke-Cola was marketed as the 'real thing'.

Q *What is promoted for you today as real life, essential things to have or do that make life rich and good - things deemed essential?*

A



Whatever it might be on offer, it will probably involve money or pleasure. So listen to what Paul said to Christians living amongst competing notions of how to live life:

Colossians 3.1-11

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This is instruction about what to focus on as being the source, theme and destination of your life. Make your life about Christ -

Colossians 3.1-11

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As we focus on our life in Christ the instruction is to

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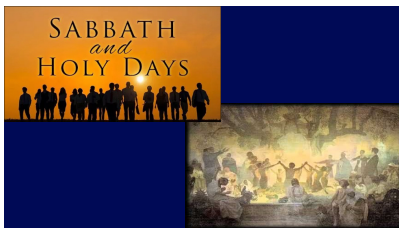
Choose life in Christ and don't seek life, happiness, fulfillment in other things.

Have you got it???

- In Christ we have life and life to abundance, in Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over and overflowing. (Luke 6.38)
- In Christ God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, (Eph. 1.3)

So don't go looking for life somewhere else.

Something that I learned at LifeStream/Church camp last week that puts this in perspective is about 'The Feasts of the Lord'.



Other religions and the world that ignores God also have feasts to celebrate. They are usually un-holy feasts involving bad things. The local carnival is a bit like this. That is how life is celebrated without God.

The contrast is the feasts of the Lord, or God's parties where joy flows from life lived in God. It does not depend on drugs or drink or bad morals but joy in the Lord.

Text: Ecclesiastes 1,2

The Old Testament reading today was the troubled writing of someone who was alive but not enjoying where his life had gone to. In tradition this book is heard as the writings of King Solomon in old age, the man who had everything -including wisdom- and yet in his old age decided that life was a waste of time.

Ecclesiastes 1

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This man was so blessed by God but in the end he did not see the point of living.

In particular he was bothered by the fact that whatever he built up would be inherited by someone else. His sweat under the hot sun would be to someone else's gain.

So why bother? Vanity all is vanity?

Is that really the case or is he missing something in his understanding of life?

Text: Luke 12

Then we get to Jesus dealing with what is perhaps the biggest distraction to being focused on living our life in him – money and material possessions.

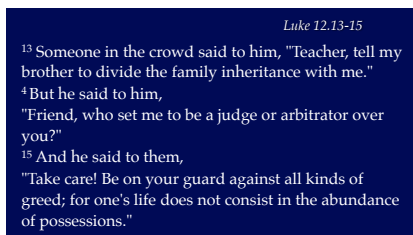
In our age this is particularly real because the contest –at least in the West- is not about which spiritual source of life people seek to live in but whether life is materially based or spiritually based. This argument has a long history in the West involving Marxism and Scientism as well as Political ideologies and Consumerism.

There are many voices that do not want to acknowledge that life is from God let alone that we need God's life as God has provided in Jesus through his Word and Spirit.

The current alternative way to ensure quality of life is to have a strong national economy. So that is what our so-called 'developed world' focuses on as the source of life.

If you do not have a developed economy you depend on somehow finding treasure, inheriting the family estate or corruption and crime. That was also the world Jesus lived in so inheritance was very important.

In Jewish society the eldest son got a double portion of the father's estate. He may also have been the 'executor of the will'. So if a younger son felt he was missing out on what he thought he should have he would look for an authority figure to advocate for him and hold the older son accountable. Jesus was that sort of recognized moral authority - a 'Rabbi'. So one day –



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¹⁴ But he said to him,

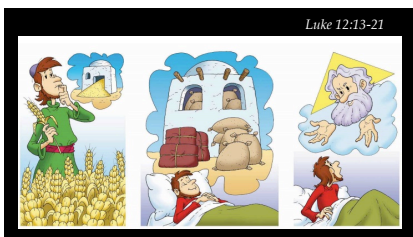
"Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?"

¹⁵ And he said to them *-that is to the crowd-*

"Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."

There it is. The One who said: "I am the Way, The Truth and the Life." (*John 14.6*) was letting this aggrieved younger son -and all who would listen- know that life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.¹

Life does not have a material or financial base. What sustains life is being in relationship with God. The story he tells to illustrate this is memorable.



The rich farmer was shrewd and wise by this world's standards. Agriculture from ancient times ran on the fact that grains – wheat or rice- can be stored. Being able to store food is a basis of civilization.

¹ But his response ('Man...!') functions as a rebuke, in which Jesus distances himself from the question and the questioner. To some extent, this seems to be part of Jesus refusing to be distracted from the business of preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom; entanglement with mundane issues too easily pulls us from the priorities that God has for us. But the following teaching shows Jesus' rejection of the underlying concerns of personal gain.

The businessman-farmer knows that when food is abundant immediately after harvest, the price is low. Then when food is scarce the price goes up, and up.
So the smart thing to do is to store the grain in safe dry conditions until prices go up.
That is the reward for good barns.

So with a bumper harvest coming in the rich farmer in Jesus' story thinks bigger barns and speaks to himself so we hear his mind:

¹⁸ Then he said (*to himself*), 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' ²

Q Do you notice something about this conversation?

A: He is totally self-referenced and self-absorbed. He does not consider anyone but himself. ³
It's his own wisdom, for his own benefit in his own power.
He makes no reference to God, or anyone else.

There is no gratitude for the harvest. It has become agribusiness, stuff to profit from.
He does not understand his life or what makes for life.
This man has lost the plot and his business plans will come to nothing.

Psalms 14 and 53 both begin with profound and politically-incorrect wisdom. (*Psalms 14.1 & 53.1*)

Psalm 14 & 53

The fool says in their heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds;
there is none who does good.

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Jesus' story describes how God's speaks to such a person as seen in the rich businessman-farmer:

Psalm 14 & 53

The fool says in their heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds;
there is none who does good.

Luke 12.20

²⁰ But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

²⁰ But God said to him, 'You fool! (*Strong language!*) This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

The vanity and futility that the philosopher of Ecclesiastes bemoaned and resented in life is what such a godless mentality will bring about. All godless endeavor is pointless.

What he should have done was given thanks to God for the bounty of life and thought about how to share his abundance with the poor of the land.

His godless self-centeredness only led him to store up God's contempt and a bigger estate for his sons.

²¹ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

² The man's conclusion to himself 'Eat, drink and be merry!' uses the language of two OT verses, Eccl 8.15 and Isa 22.13—both verses which articulate the futility of life or the disregard for the perspective of God. It is worth noting that Jesus' focus here is not primarily ethical, but it is *theocentric*. The issue is not merely that the man has acted selfishly and unjustly, but that he has left God out of all his careful calculations.

³ Luther described sin as *cor curvum se*, the heart turned in on itself. It is notable that the man considers neither God's claims on his life and wealth, nor the needs of those around him, ignoring the consistent demand in the Scriptures that those blessed with wealth should be concerned for the needs of the poor.

Conclusion

So how do you do this?

How do you live life wisely with reference to God as hidden in Christ?

What comes to my mind is:

Some Take Aways

- Declare God as Lord of all that you are and hold.
 - Acknowledge the Lord as your life in all aspects.
- Celebrate being a child of God, adopted in Christ.
- Give thanks for life and all you receive.
 - Worship in humble gratitude.
- Manage resources as one accountable - a 'Steward'.
 - Return a first portion or tithe.
 - Be generous to others - especially the needy. Reflect the grace you have received.

- Declare God as Lord of all that you are and lay hold of.
 - Acknowledge the Lord as your life in all aspects.
- Celebrate being a child of God, a slave in his possession adopted in Christ.
- Give thanks for life and all you receive.
 - Worship in humble gratitude.
- Manage your resources with awareness that you are accountable. Be a 'Steward'.
 - Return a first portion or tithe is a basic step in this direction. The discipline of worshipping in this way is more important for us than it is for God!
 - Be generous to others - especially the needy. Reflect the grace you have received.

These are instructions for people wanting to live life before God in Christ.