

ESF, Lord's day service message  
11/25/2018

### **What Matters Most in Life**

Mark 3:13-19

*<sup>13</sup> Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> He appointed twelve designating them apostles- that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and to have authority to drive out demons. <sup>16</sup> These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); <sup>17</sup> James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); <sup>18</sup> Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

There was a man who went to see a doctor for physical tests. A couple of days later he got a call from the doctor. The Doctor said that he had bad news and worse news. "Give me the bad news first" the man asked. "Your tests showed that you had 48 hours to live." replied the doctor. "That's the worst thing I have ever heard! How can there be worse news than that?" The man asked. The doctor paused for a moment then replied, "Well, I've been trying to call you for 2 days now."

If your doctor says you today that you can live only several more days or months what would you do with those days? Definitely you would not spend the remaining days doing trivial things. You would think about what matters most. You would think about what is the most important thing in your life. Then you would concentrate your total concern on the most important thing.

We need such concentration even if we don't have a notice of a shorted life. Because in the end we all will face such a moment. Anyway man's life is too short to do many things effectively and meaningfully. We need to figure out what matters most in the end. Then we have to focus our priority on that.

Today, we can learn from Jesus, the master of all masters, what matters most in every man's life in the end, and how we can focus our lives on that most important thing.

## **People**

Jesus spent three years in public ministry. He knew that his ministry life would be very short. Even before he began his public ministry, he knew that his life wouldn't be long. So he constantly concentrated on what mattered most in his life. For Jesus it was to live according to the will of God, and let the will of God be accomplished through his life. What was God's will in his life? It was to finish the task of salvation for all men. Also, it was to establish the church through which saved people could gather together to love one other and to build up God's kingdom.

To accomplish the task, Jesus did not try to make money first. Jesus did not try to build a building first. Jesus did not try to achieve a high social status. Jesus did not try to gain political power. Jesus chose a group of people first and spent most of His time and energy with those people and for those people. As he knew, he was going to die three years later when he was just about thirty three years old. But through those people's witnessing, his gospel message was able to be written, and the church was founded. Then through their written testimony and through the church, the message of salvation has been proclaimed to the whole world to this very day.

Here Jesus is teaching us what matters most in life. It is people. The most important thing in our lives is winning people and making them faithful disciples of Jesus. Do you know what was the final word Jesus gave Peter? It was: *Take care of my sheep*. What did he mean by his sheep? He meant people. Jesus gave him a word regarding people, about winning people and taking care of people. Jesus gave the word not only to Peter but to all his followers. Since that moment, Peter focused wholly on applying that word into his life. Then later, he encouraged the leaders in the church to apply that command to their lives also. 1 Peter

*5:2-3, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."*

People are God's eternal reward in your life. They are the crown from God in your life. Paul testifies that truth in Philip. 4:1, *Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!*

Try to reach out to people with the gospel of Jesus, and take care of them as Jesus has taken care of you. Reaching out to people and taking care of people is the most important thing in our lives. That matters most. When your physical health, your beauty, your possessions, and your achievements abandon you, the people will remain. Invest your time in reaching out to people and to take care of them with God's love. That investment will never disappoint you and remain eternally.

## **Grace**

What matters most in our lives is God's grace. Why? We are saved by God's grace. We can become children of God by God's grace. We can be healthy and successful by God's grace. We can live in peace of mind by God's grace. We can go to heaven and have eternal life by nothing but God's grace.

When we see the people whom Jesus chose to be his apostles, we understand what God's grace really is.

First, God's grace in Jesus embraces all kinds of people including you Jesus chose twelve people to be his apostles. Why 12? The number twelve signifies all tribes in the world. When Jesus chose those twelve,

he wanted them to be the apostles of all the tribes of the world. He told them to go to the ends of the earth to reach out to all tribes in the world with the gospel of God's salvation (Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8).

However, some of them were uneducated and poor fishermen. In terms of religious and social status, they were very lowly people. According to the law of the priests, they were not qualified to be chosen spiritual workers. But Jesus chose them to be spiritual workers. By doing so, Jesus demonstrated that in God's grace, everybody can receive God's blessings without being discriminated against. Galatians 3:28-29 says, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Some years ago, a very peculiar sight could be seen at a large downtown church in England. On the first Sunday of the New Year, an ex-convict knelt to receive communion beside the judge who had sentenced him to seven years in prison. After being sentenced, the young convict was led to Christ through the church's prison ministry. After his release he became an active member of the church. After church, the judge was walking home with the pastor and said to him, "What a miracle of grace."

"You mean the former thief who knelt beside you today?" the pastor asked.

"No. I was thinking of myself," the judge said. "That young man had nothing but a history of crime behind him, and when he saw Jesus as his Savior he knew there was salvation and hope and joy for him. And he knew how much he needed that help. But look at me. I was taught from earliest infancy to live as a gentleman; that my word was to be my bond; that I was to say my prayers, go to church, take communion and so on. I went to Oxford, earned my degrees, was called to the bar and eventually

became a judge. Pastor, nothing but the grace of God could have caused me to admit that I was a sinner in need of a Savior."

In God's grace through Jesus, there is neither a superior tribe nor inferior tribe. In God's grace available through Jesus, there is no distinction between the rich and the poor, between the majority or the minority, between the highly educated and the uneducated. Choosing those twelve people, Jesus proved God's such amazing grace. When Jesus calls you to be a believer, he calls you to live in such grace. Claim that grace. Live in that grace. Manifest that grace.

Second, God's grace in Jesus gives unlimited forgiveness to you

Some of them were notorious sinners. Apostle Matthew's original name was Levi. He was a tax collector. In those days, the Jews regarded tax collectors as the most sinful of people. Those who tried to live holy lives despised tax collectors. They even pray thanksgiving prayers to God for not being tax collectors. Luke 18:11 *The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector.*

But Jesus chose such a sinful tax collector to be one of his apostles. By choosing such a notorious sinner, Jesus was criticized as the friend of sinners. Not only Levi, but all of them were sinners. They failed again and again. As sinful human beings, while they were living together with Jesus who was the perfect sinless person, they must have sinned many times even in a single day. Peter denied his connection with Jesus publically. Most of them just fled when Jesus was caught and crucified. Jesus even forgave Judah Iscariot who betrayed him later. Of course, Jesus' heart was broken by their failures and betrayal. But he forgave them.

Through them what Jesus really wants to show and prove to the world is God's unlimited grace for all sinners. Without grace, none of them could ever have been called by God. Without God's grace, none of them could be chosen to be a disciple of Jesus.

In that grace we can always have another chance. In that grace, we can always start over again even when we lose everything we have. In that grace we have reason not to give up on hope. In that grace, we have reason to accept all sinners, even the worst sinners. Living in such grace is what matters most in the end.

### **Purpose**

What matters most in our lives is to know what is the purpose of our lives and to fulfill that purpose. When Jesus took care of people with amazing grace, he did not leave them to live their lives without purpose. He took care of them and trained them to find out the purpose of their lives and to fulfill the purpose. What was the purpose?

#### **1. To be with him**

Jesus first purpose was for them to be with him. What does it mean to be with him? It means that they would learn and be trained through sharing life together with him. Jesus spent time with them day and night for about three full years. He did not just spend time with them but had intimate fellowship with them. Thinking about the actual amount of time Jesus spent with them intimately, it was a very long time. He slept with them, ate every meal with them, traveled with them and did ministry with them. By being with them in this way, Jesus trained them to learn from him and to grow constantly. Jesus trained them to imitate him.

When Jesus calls a person to be a believer, his first purpose of the calling is for the person to be with him. The common goal of all

believers is to share life with Jesus, to imitate Jesus, and to be like him more and more. Jesus has called you and me to share his way of life, and to imitate him first of all.

Also, Jesus teaches us how to take care of people whom we reach out to. We need not only to win people around us, but also to take care of them intimately. While we are imitating Jesus, we have to encourage people to imitate us.

## 2. To preach his gospel

The final purpose in Jesus' calling the twelve people is to send them out to preach his gospel. There are many noble things to do in this world, but none of them is equal to the preaching of the gospel. Because it is fighting against the Devil's power, invading his territory of darkness and setting the people free from the enslavement of his dark power.

That is why they need spiritual authority and power to win over the evil spirits. That is why Jesus gave them the authority to drive out demons. We are called into a spiritual conflict to win over evil spiritual forces. Paul said it best in Ephesians 6:12 *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* Although we are weak, we can win the war, because we have Jesus' authority.

When we try to be a representative of Jesus in this world, Jesus gives his own authority to us against which no authority can stand.

In Mark 16:15-18, Jesus promises us that he would do powerful and blessed things when we preach the gospel with faith in his authority:

*"...Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ...And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my*

*name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”*

Claim that authority. Use that authority. Fight all evil spirits with that authority. That is the most important thing for you to do every day as a believer.