

11/1/18

- I. My Notes... WWC message 110418
- II. Series: Let's Live
 - a. Title: What's It All About?
 - b. Text: Lam. 3:26
 - c. Quote: What makes us human is not our mind but our heart, not our ability to think but our ability to love. **Henri Nouwen** (Author, Theologian, Priest)
- III. Introduction
 - a. For a long time, I have attempted to begin my writing, my messages, with "appropriate" stories. It has been a quest in research to find things that related to the text and direction I have sensed the Lord leading in my sermons (talks, proclamations). Over the last several months in our Wednesday night Bible Studies I have been challenging the group to read the Bible for what it says – not for what we think or want it to say. It seems that we live with a lot of expectations. Now, some expectations can be helpful. When I get behind the wheel I expect others to follow the rules of the road so that I will be able to arrive safely at my destination. Alas, that doesn't seem to happen as often as I would like in this day and age. People get behind the wheel and behave selfishly and are distracted... (But I digress). On the other side of the coin, many expectations cause division and cause others to feel judged or unacceptable. I think there is a way to explain to others that they may be doing something hurtful or inappropriate in a way that shows understanding and compassion. Here I go again, wandering around the block, trying to find a way in so that I can communicate what's on my heart. Sometimes it's easier to just dive in...
 - b. The days, they are changing. In my lifetime I have used rotary dial phones and party telephone lines, a regular typewriter, cassette and 8 track tapes,

rabbit ears on a TV, school lockers filled with books, fill-in the bubble tests, punch cards, (can you think of more?). I would guess that you can recall a few of the things that have changed in your life. The way we live our life may have evolved but the things that are important haven't. I don't know one person how a gone through the loss of someone important in their life that wouldn't give everything for another moment or conversation – for 10 more minutes with their loved one. Relationships are key. Like I stated last week in the message – seeking the Giver (the Lord God) is the key. It is the important lessons that seem to stick with you. All too often life has a way of helping us learn those important lessons.

- c. Can you think about one of those important lessons you have learned? Something I have learned is that we don't need to rely on the stories of others to share life lessons. Our walk, our journey has value and importance. Sharing experience builds bridges, it provides a common ground to live on. Over the last several weeks we have been on a journey to understand our relationship with the Holy Spirit. As we grow in grace, we learn the true value of our relationship with the Lord. Eternity in His presence is the benefit but that isn't the only thing to hang our hat on. The concept of eternity can be an overwhelming one to wrap one's head around. Let's look from a slightly different perspective. In recognizing our need for a Savior, in coming to terms with the truth that we weren't created to be God (He was already there), eternity begins at that point of recognition and acceptance. Life may never get easier here, on Earth. There are all kinds of reasons for continued challenges and hardships. Life here is lived on foreign soil... "But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior." (Philippians 3:20 NLT2) ... Our present reality, as believers, is that our home is heaven – eternity in the presence of the Lord God. Our residence is here, on earth, is under the "power of the evil One" (ref. 1 John 5:19). And because of this, there is going to be chaos – hardship and difficulty – disobedience.

d. When I was 12 we had a particularly rough year as a family. My brothers and I were signed up for the local Little League. After tryouts the teams were drafted for "the Majors". Ron, who is 14 months younger than I am, was drafted to the Major Cubs. I didn't make the cut and was "exiled" to AAA. Initially, that was hard for me. My younger brother playing in the premier part of the league and I was left to play on the schoolyard lot. In my exile, I met a man who I came to admire and highly respect, Mr. Uyeda, I met some kids that I would become friends with in High School, and I had a great season. It was the right fit, even though I thought it was a punishment at first. There are times that it seems that our walk, as Christians, falls into the "exile" category and that isn't the truth. There are things we are meant to learn, areas we can grow, and maturity that needs to take place. Sometimes a win on a smaller scale prepares you for successes down the road.

IV. Text

- a. Learning that there is a different way we, as believers, can fight our battles is one of those lessons that can take a lifetime
- b. There are times we try to fit others into our categories, not because it is the right thing to do, but because it is easier and more comfortable
- c. Let me say that acceptance is a great gift to give.
- d. And in the challenges we find due to our residence here we can learn to be patient and focused on what is important. Our vertical relationship is the start of our success
- e. The Lord God reveals His love and value for each of us...
 - i. Malachi 3:17 (CSB)

"They will be mine," says the LORD of Armies, "my own possession on the day I am preparing. I will have compassion on them as a man has compassion on his son who serves him."

ii. John 6:37 (NASB)

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."

f. We must learn to trust and rest in these truths

g. Lam. 3:26 (NASB) - *It is good that he waits silently For the salvation of the LORD.*

h. Patience is hard.

i. Here's a truth that I have learned. When I fight my battles, I lose – even if it seems like I won. There is stress, disunity, hurt. Winning means someone else loses

j. Waiting silently... no complaints (ref. Phil. 2:14), serve with gladness (ref. Ps. 100:2), trust the Lord will fight for you (ref. 2 Chron. 20:17)

k. Grumbling, complaining, gossiping take us off course, they put us in a bad place... First, where is our focus? On self. Then, what testimony do others see? One of a victim, a selfish person

l. We can find joy in any circumstance, in every situation. Doing that allows one to rest in the Lord's grace and goodness. And we can see what the Lord has in store for us

V. Expectations

a. While I may have expectations, at times 😊. I (and you too) can trust the Lord to accomplish His purpose in my life

b. Instead of focusing on what is wrong, find what is right and dwell on that.

c. Psalm 37:7 (CSB) - Be silent before the LORD and wait expectantly for him; do not be agitated by one who prospers in his way, by the person who carries out evil plans.

d. You get to choose how you are going to live, who you are going to trust, and the way to react or respond – everyday

- e. We are loved, unconditionally.
 - i. For God so loved.... John 3:16
 - ii. Nothing can separate us for God's love... Rom. 8:39
 - iii. He cares for you... 1 Pet. 5:7
- f. Understanding this can take us to a place of rest and comfort (if we allow it). But that requires focus on the importance of our bond with the Lord – not what is going on with others
- g. Something to understand and accept (to get our heads around) is there are going to be people who have success in the eyes of the world
- h. Know this... all things here, except our relationship with God and with others, are temporal. Wealth vanishes, castles crumble, the grass dies
- i. There is no reason to dwell on, to get upset, about the success or apparent victory others may have
- j. As some might say, "life has a way of working things out". I might change that a bit to state that I trust the Lord will make it right.
- k. And if we are "blessed" with certain things, they should be used as tools and gifts to help others see God's love and grace.

VI. God Will Fix It

- a. I think many hold onto an ideal of what is fair and just
- b. I have observed people become indignant at perceived inequities and unfairness
- c. I'm not saying we should just let people walk over us
- d. I'm not saying we should compromise

- e. Those are unhealthy behaviors
- f. But when I am trying to fight battles that aren't mine to fight or I am shouting about wrongs just because I disagree, I've lost perspective
- g. Luke 18:7-8 (CSB) - Will not God grant justice to his elect who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay helping them? I tell you that he will swiftly grant them justice. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"
- h. Here's what I know.... Truth has a way of revealing itself (see Luke 8:17) and righteousness – right living prevails (triumphs, succeeds)
- i. The best way I can fight my battles, I can't right those wrongs in my life, is to focus on my relationship with the Lord. To spend my time and effort discovering ways to honor and glorify Him
- j. He promises justice (cf. Rom. 12:19), He will right the wrongs (see Is. 61:8)
- k. The best I can do is look for the blessing, find the good, in each circumstance. That way I am honoring the Lord God and leaving in peace and joy
- l. Relying (only) on my abilities to fix things, on my strength to fight the battles, brings stress and failure
- m. Philippians 4:8-9 (MSG)

Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies.

- n. Trust is hard for many. Life has brought many opportunities for hurt and confusion and that has an adverse effect on us

VII. Our Reaction

- a. Choosing to see what is good, what is right, showing others grace and kindness... that can only take place when we focus on the Lord and trust Him completely
- b. We must be aware that we (as people – human) have limitations. And we need to choose, to ask for guidance and direction
- c. Galatians 6:9-10 (ESV) - And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.
- d. Our lives, as believers, are on the move. That means we can always find an opportunity to show grace, to serve, to love others and honor the Lord God
- e. We can do that by the strength and guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- f. In times of frustration, we may want to give up. (I have battled that feeling from time to time). But as we trust the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we will discover what the fruits of perseverance and faithfulness are
- g. There are needs all around. So many people today are struggling, are trying to make it. There are many more that are lost, confused, anxious, depressed, and so on
- h. We have duty to help them find grace and mercy. It's the same grace and mercy we have come to know
- i. But, that can be tiring – wearing – sometimes devastating.
- j. There are opportunities to do good, to help, to show God's love and grace
- k. And we need to remain in prayer so that we can act in a fashion that meets the needs and points the glory to the Lord God

VIII. Last Thought

a. A man and his wife are awakened at 3 o'clock in the morning by a loud pounding on their door. The man gets up and goes to the door where a drunken stranger in the pouring rain is asking for a push.

"Not a chance!" says the husband. "It's three o'clock in the morning!" He slams the door and returns to bed.

"Who was it?" asks his wife. "Just a drunken stranger asking for a push." he answers.

"Did you help him?" She asks.

"No, I didn't. It's three in the morning and it's raining out."

"Well, you've got a short memory" says his wife. "Can't you remember about three months ago when we broke down on vacation and those two guys helped us? I think you should help him."

The man does as he is told and gets dressed and goes out into the pouring rain and calls out into the dark. "Hello? Are you still there?"

"Yes," comes the answer.

"Do you still want a push?" calls out the husband.

"Yes, please!" comes the reply from the dark.

"Where are you, I can't see you?" asks the husband.

"I'm over here...on the swing."

b. It's that way with those we serve at times. We aren't able to meet their needs in the way they want us to but we are there to show love and grace

c. And that can get wearing and distracting.

d. So, where will you turn to "fight that battle"?

e. Let's pray

- f. May the light of God's grace and glory shine on your path. May you find joy in the moments of service and help. And may the Holy Spirit guide you into that "sweet spot" of His presence.