

Resolved to End Well

Introduction

I put the following sayings on the church sign out front this week: TIME MOVES FAST, IT WILL FLEE - SAY GOODBYE TO 2023. NEW YEAR COMING, ITS AT THE DOOR, SO HELLO TO 2024.

Since today is the last day of the year, I thought it would be good to reflect a bit on the passing of time in order to make the most of the present and prepare for the future. Every twenty-four hours our calendars change from one day to the next at midnight, but that is so routine that little thought is given to it. When 365 of those days pass by and December 31 becomes January 1, we recognize that a significant amount of time has passed by resulting in most people becoming more reflective in general demonstrated by all of the “year in review” articles written. That can and should be a good thing.

I trust that you recognize that time is both precious and fleeting. Everyone gets the same amount of it each day, but what is done with it varies significantly. You can use time wisely by progressing toward good and proper goals. Or time can be used foolishly wasted on things of little or no value. You can be efficient and effective in your use of time, but you cannot save it or store it for it will pass by regardless of what you do. Paul encourages us in Ephesians 5:16 to make *the most of our time, because the days are evil*. Moses encourages us to be mindful of time in Psalm 90:12 telling us to number our days that we might present to God a heart of wisdom.

Foolish people do not use time wisely nor do they learn the lessons from how they have spent it. They tend to keep their thoughts shallow when evaluating the passing year and will judge it as either good or bad in relationship to getting what they desired and therefore are either happy or sad to see it end. They do not think deeply about what could have been or should have been but only what has been. And while the lessons were there and available, little was learned. The foolish prefer to forget the past and take on the new year as a clean slate to write a new chapter of life. And while every day is an opportunity to make changes for the better, if what has been written on the slate in the past is not properly dealt with, then it is not clean and it will hinder the effort to write something new on it in the present. As time progresses, daydreams about a wonderful future become nightmares of lost opportunity and tragic consequences.

The wise are more reflective knowing that every day is an opportunity to learn and grow so that the past can be properly handled allowing the present to be improved and the future better. The wise will write down lessons learned and make plans to implement those lessons in the present in preparation for the future. Those are called resolutions. Making thoughtful resolutions to change as individuals to become better people was at one time a common desire in American society. Benjamin Franklin wrote down this once common thought this way, “*Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man.*”

While I still think that most people would agree with Franklin’s sentiment, I think only a minority would do the work necessary to put that sentiment into action. American society as a whole is much more tolerant of vices than at war with them. Peace defined as the state of tranquility due to harmony with neighbors because you know them and share common values and goals for your community is increasingly rare. Urban and suburban living in commuter culture results in hardly knowing your neighbors much less interacting with them in positive ways on a regular basis. Peace is redefined as freedom from civil disturbance. Being a “better man” is subject to wide ranging differences in what it means to be “better.”

Then there is that very vocal minority that gets lots of media attention whose values are opposite of godliness. They believe their vices are good things and they are in love with them. Peace with a neighbor is dominating them so that they either join you or no longer resist. And being a “better man” would be sexist, so you could only be a better “person” with “better” defined as whatever is politically correct. This point was demonstrated the week before Christmas by ABC news criticizing Mike Johnson, Speaker of the House, for having taken his daughter to a “purity ball,” which ABC described as a “controversial formal dance event.” Included in the event is a pledge by the dads to be faithful men of integrity in one marriage under accountability. The “controversy” is the daughters making vows of chastity until marriage. Chastity used to be normal and valued as good and proper. The societal elite of today think that is repressive. But then, considering the kinds of morally depraved shows ABC offers as entertainment, that would be expected.

Resolutions

Let me challenge you to follow the advice of Moses, Paul and even Benjamin Franklin to give some thought to your use of the time God has granted you on this earth and make some resolutions for the coming year so that at the end of it you will be more Christlike in your character than you are now. Since that is a purpose of salvation (Romans 8:29) and God has promised to continue to perfect the good work He began in you until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:6), then you are assured that God will be helping you in this endeavor.

God has not only given the Christian the ability to change, He has charged us to change. Consider Paul’s practical application of the gospel in Romans 12:1-2, ¹ *“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”* We are to set aside the old life with its sinful habits and put on the new life (Colossians 3) for sin is no longer our master because we are to be slaves of righteousness (Romans 6).

And while resolutions to exercise more, eat better and lose some weight is good and perhaps needed, my challenge for consideration of resolutions that are of greater significance in changing your life. Here are a few examples.

1) The quest to know God Himself and walk with Him. This was the cry of Moses to God in Exodus 33:13, *“let me know Thy ways, that I may know Thee,”* and in verse 18, *“I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!”* John 17:3 states that Jesus came for the purpose that we might know the only true God. 1 Peter 3:18 reminds us that the Christian is to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. And Paul’s example in Philippians 3:10 was that he sought to know Jesus, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death. This quest will require a change of priorities and use of time as Bible study, prayer and serving the Lord become increasingly important to you.

2) The quest to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The heathen worship false gods, and tragically, the worship of many professing Christians ends up not being much better because trying to worship the true God in accordance with your own desires and schemes instead of according to God’s commands is actually also false worship. A fundamental pursuit of the true Christian is the proper worship of God. We fulfill it with the true sacrifices that God desires which are the sacrifices of praise that come from a broken and contrite heart and spirit (Heb. 13:15; Psalm 51:17).

3) The quest for personal holiness. God’s command is to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). He saves people so that they might be holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:4). The true Christian

wants to be cleansed by God and have a clean heart before Him (Psalm 51:2,10) in order to live a life separated from the world and unto Him (Romans 12:2). A corollary to this is to know and do God's will which separates the Christian from the world and its practices.

4) The quest to be used of God for His glory. All that a Christian does, ranging from extraordinary to the mundane are to be done to glorify God. In Matthew 5:16 Jesus said that your good deeds are to be shining lights that prod people to give glory to God. Paul covers everything in 1 Corinthians 10:31 writing, *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* Paul was able to rejoice in his unpleasant circumstances of being in jail because he sought God's glory (Phil. 1) and pressed on toward the goal for prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13).

5) The quest to see others know Jesus and follow him. This is the motive for fulfilling the great commission in making disciples of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19-20). 1 Peter 2:9 states that we were saved for the purpose of proclaiming the excellencies of God to the nations. This has a corollary in learning and using your spiritual gifts God gives them so that the whole body of Christ, the church, is built up and becomes more effective in the task of discipleship including teaching obedience to Christ (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12).

The result of all of these is that your life is lived for God instead of yourself because you are in submission to the Spirit and conducting yourself in a manner worthy the gospel of Christ (Phil. 1:27).

The fundamental issues come down to two particular commands which Jesus states in Matthew 22:37-40, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."* *"This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* *" On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."*

Do you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind? How do you demonstrate that in your daily life? Do you love your neighbor as yourself. How do you demonstrate that in your daily life? All the rest of both the fundamental general issues and all the particular issues arise from these two commandments.

Let me drive this point a little further with some practical questions that will help stimulate your thinking so you can make some specific application.

Loving God: Do you really love God with all your heart, soul and mind? Anything more important to you than God is an idol. What idols do you have in you life? How much time do you spend in own activities such as personal Bible study, prayer, meditation and worship compared to time spent in your hobbies and being entertained? Do you know what your spiritual gift(s) are? Are you using them? How much time do you spend in serving the Lord? How does that compare to time spent in your hobbies and entertainment? How about your finances? Do you give joyfully to the Lord's work? How does your giving to Him compare with spending on things that are for your own selfish pleasures? Do you ever use the Lord's name in vain? Do you treat Him in any way as less than the holy being that He is?

Loving your neighbors: Do you love your neighbors as yourself? Do you honor your parents? Children, do you obey your parents? Is there anyone you hate? Do you have a grudge against anyone? Do you refrain from adulterous glances and thoughts? What do you allow yourself to see? hear? think about? Do you steal? That includes giving less than a full day's work to your employer and cheating on your taxes. Do you lie about anything even if it seems innocent to you? What about gossip? Are you discontent and want what your neighbors have? Do you rejoice in your neighbor's success?

Godliness or Wordliness: Do you love the world and the things in the world or God? Is your mind set on things above or the things of this earth? (Col. 3:2). Have you considered the members of your

earthly body dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed? (Col. 3:5). Have you put aside anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech from your mouth? (Col. 3:8; Eph.4:31). Have you put on the new self (Eph. 4:24f). Is your mind set to think on what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praise worthy? (Phil. 4:8). Is your life marked by walking in the flesh with its idolatry, heresies, enmities, strife, jealousy, disputes, envying, drunkenness and carousing? (Gal. 5:19-21). Or are you walking in the Spirit with His fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? (Gal. 5:22,23).

Since none of us here have reached perfection yet nor will we this side of heaven, then each of us can improve in these areas. The question that remains is “will you?” Will you do what is needed to change? Breaking bad habits and replacing them with new ones is hard enough. Putting off the old man and putting on the new is harder because it requires more than just resistance to the enticements of the world. It requires a transformation by the renewing of your mind as I mentioned earlier from Romans 12:1-2. That would be impossible if you were left on your own to do it, but God has not left us alone. He points the way we are to go by His commands which we are to obey, but more importantly, He gives us the Holy Spirit to empower and guide us. It is then just a matter of faith to step forward to do what God wants relying on the Holy Spirit to help us. But there is also another source of help God has given the believer, and that is the church, the body of Christ.

Getting Help. I mentioned earlier that God gives Christians spiritual gifts by which we help one another mature, but as part of the Church, we are also charged with the many “one another” commands which direct how we are to interact with one another. They include commands such as be kind, tender-hearted, forgiving, bearing one another’s burdens, be devoted toward, love, accept, encourage, serve and confess sins to one another. Too often fear of losing respect or even being condemned keeps us from being vulnerable enough with each other to get the needed help. Yes, caution is needed because there are immature people who would use your vulnerability against you, but do not let fear stop you from seeking help from other Christians. Each of us need people who will pray for us, encourage us and hold us accountable. That is one of the functions of the body of Christ. For that reason each of us must work to both be or become trustworthy ourselves while building relationships with those that can be trusted with sensitive information. Without trustworthiness there cannot be vulnerability, and without vulnerability the body life of the church will be stifled. Others cannot help you if you hide or deny your problems and weaknesses.

To encourage vulnerability and building trust, I have put an additional insert into the bulletin. There is a place for you to write down some of your resolutions which can then be given to someone you trust to help you. Ask them to pray for you, encourage you and hold you accountable. If you want to remain anonymous, but want prayer, then put your request down and leave your name off, or put your name down and put “unspoken” on the resolution line and give it to me, or put it in the faith box, and the matter will be prayed about.

Motivations

Now I could end the sermon here and we could all go home with a pointed reminder about the necessity to continue to strive to improve in character in the coming New Year, but this is actually a lot more serious than that. The seriousness can be summarized in a simple but very disconcerting question followed by a disturbing followup question. How well will be your end? What if were today? Those two questions deserve your serious consideration for the reality is that though each of us assumes that we will be here tomorrow, none of us knows the length of our days on this earth. There are a host of causes that could result in your death quickly if not instantly, and as I have been emphasizing in the last few sermons, the doctrine of the imminent return of Jesus for His church means believers could be raptured at anytime and unbelievers will be left behind to face a time of tribulation that Jesus described as “*such*

as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor every will” (Matthew 24:21). What will be the state of your life when either of those events happens?

Will you end well? Are you ready if your end comes today? These are not just hypothetical questions. This is reality that any senior has seen played out over the course of their years of walking this earth because we have been to a lot of funerals. As a pastor I have also officiated at a lot of funerals. The youngest was about six months and the oldest was 105 years old. I have officiated funerals of those who became ill and had many months to prepare for death, and I have performed funerals for those that fully expected to return home that evening. I have had the joy of doing funerals for old saints such as Mary Gellatly who was well prepared and looking forward to leaving this life to be with the Lord Jesus. I have had the heartache of doing funerals for both those who were indifferent to Christ and those that openly rejected Him and were afraid of death. The state of each person at death is determined by the decisions made each day of what they will do and the goals they will pursue. If you want to have a good end, then you need to have as your top priority diligence in the present to becoming conformed to the image of Christ.

Somewhat parallel to the parable of the soils in Matthew 13, there are four possible ends for each person: The fool, The fearful, the fruitless and the fruitful. The first three will end badly because they are not prepared. Only the last will end well.

The Foolish

All children are born foolish which is why God charges parents to raise them in His nurture and admonition to drive that foolishness out. If that does not happen, then young fools become middle age fools who become old fools. Such fools can be very intelligent, but that does not help for as Proverbs 14:12 warns, *“There is a way which seems wright to a man, But its end is the way of death.”* Being wise in their own eyes, fools get farther away from God instead of closer and will follow one of the paths of unrighteousness in Romans 1 & 2. The immoral unrighteous (Romans 1:21-32) become increasingly distant from God over the course of life and more depraved in mind often having a flagrantly sinful lifestyle to match.

The moral unrighteous (Romans 2:1- 16) judge the flagrantly immoral, but in doing so condemn themselves for they are also disobedient to God but just not as outwardly flagrant. Though not robbing banks, they pilfer time and supplies from work. Though not sexually perverse, they are adulterers at heart. Though not blatantly blaspheming, they are still irreverent toward God. If they have thoughts toward God, they believe their “good” will outweigh their “bad” when God judges them, but their disobedience to truth and lack of repentance is only storing up God’s wrath against them in the day of His righteous judgment.

The religious unrighteous (Romans 2:17-29) think of themselves as guides to God and teachers of His law, but those following either religions of false gods or religions that pervert the way to the true God will end up under His condemnation. The Pharisees of Jesus’ time boasted in being keepers of God’s law, but their interpretation of God’s law in order to justify their transgressing His laws only brought His condemnation. There are plenty of very religious folks today doing the same thing.

The commonality of fools is that they continue on the same or a worse course even after hearing the truth. As stated in 1 Cor. 2:14, the things of the Spirit God are foolishness to them; and they cannot understand them. When they hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, they do not understand it so they will either ignore it or pervert it to fit within the moral or religious system they already have. In the parable of the soils, this is likened to being the side of the road from which the evil one snatches away the seed that was sown. This is the vast majority of the world because they follow false religions and philosophies or a perversion of Christianity that has a different gospel.

Another common trait among fools is indifference toward what is of eternal importance because of focus on the immediate. That is the point of Jesus’ parable in Luke 12:16-21 of the rich man who planned

to build bigger barns to contain his wealth and planned to take his ease to eat, drink and be merry, but God said to him, *“You fool! This night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?”*

Proverbs 1:29–32 still applies to fools today. ²⁹ *Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the Lord.* ³⁰ *“They would not accept my (wisdom’s) counsel, They spurned all my reproof.* ³¹ *“So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated with their own devices.* ³² *“For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them.”* The life of a fool does not end well. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 the end of those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus is *“the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power.”*

The Fearful

Fear is a normal and proper emotion for humans because we are both limited and mortal. Not matter how much we want to control everything around us we cannot, and no matter how much we want to deny it, we all know that our lives on this earth will end. The question is what is the source of fear? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of both knowledge and wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10) and it prolongs life (Prov. 10:27; 14:27; 19:23) for it keeps you away from evil (Prov. 16:6) and leads to riches and honor (Prov. 22:4). A lack of fear of God results in the opposite and the fear of man brings a snare (Prov. 29:5). It was the fear of man that caused Aaron to make the golden calf (Exodus 32) and David’s fear of Achish king of Gath caused him to feign insanity (1 Samuel 21:13-15; Psalm 34). It was fear of the people that resulted in king Saul’s downfall (1 Sam. 15:24). David repented and ended well. Saul did not and his life continued to decline ending badly consulting a medium contrary to his own law and begging an Amalekite to kill him after he had botched his attempt at suicide following the defeat of his army (2 Sam. 1:2-12). 1 Chronicles 10:13 states directly that *“Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the Lord.”* Specifically it was for not keeping the word of the Lord and consulting a medium instead of the Lord.

In the parable of the soils, this is parallel to the rocky soil in which the seed of the gospel springs up quickly and then withers away in the sun. These are people who initially respond to the gospel, but their fear of man is greater than their fear of the Lord which is a quick path to apostasy. I have known many people like this over the years. They want to avoid offending others - family, friends, their boss, co-workers, teachers, classmates, etc. - so they go along to get along and instead offend Christ. They may even join in ridicule and persecution of Christians in order to be part of the majority, and they certainly will not stand with the Christians for fear of being ridiculed or persecuted themselves. And yes this can and often does include people who claim to be Christians. This has increased greatly in the last few years as supposed Christians identify with what is politically correct instead of Biblically correct. They stand with the LGBTQxyz agenda instead of against its flagrant immoralities. They seek to woe people to an emasculated Christ by being winsome instead of calling for repentance before Jesus who defeated death and will be returning as the conquering king. Their end will also be bad.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:33, *“whoever denies Me before men, I will deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”* In Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26, 33 those that love their possessions, others, including family members, or their own life more than Him are not worthy of Him and cannot be His disciple. All those who have greater fear of man than of God, and all who have more love of this world than love for God, will have a bad end.

The Fruitless

This next group can be very confusing because you cannot always be sure what to believe about them. These are people whose profession of faith does not match their life’s expression of it. In the parable of the soils these are those who are soil full of thorns. The worry of the world and deceitfulness

of riches choke it out so that it is unfruitful. In Matthew 7:15-23 Jesus states that we will know the true and the false by their fruits since a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. That is easy if the plant and its fruit are distinguishable, and certainly it is easy to distinguish many who have false professions by the bad fruit of what they believe and do. 2 Peter 2 is a whole chapter describing the character and actions of false teachers. In 1 Timothy 4:1 Paul warns that *“the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to the doctrine of demons,”* which includes forbidding marriage and abstaining from foods. Others fit the description in 1 John 2:19, *“They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”* Paul describes Demas who had been a co-laborer (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24) as later *“having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica”* (2 Tim. 4:10). Judas betrayed Jesus and he had remorse instead of repentance resulting in him hanging himself instead of seeking forgiveness. Such people will have a bad ending.

More difficult to identify are the plants grown among weeds that become so entangled that multiple plants appear to come from the same root which bears a mixture of fruit. That creates confusion about the identity of the plant except to the trained botanist. Jesus always knows who is actually His. And lest anyone think a true Christian cannot be quite a mess and practice sinful things, you must remember that 1 Corinthians was written to Christians. And despite their self evaluation that they were spiritual, Paul calls them fleshy (carnal) because they were acting like infants in Christ and walking as mere men (3:1-5). Be very careful of accusing others of not being Christians because they do not meet your standards of righteousness. You probably do not meet the standards of others.

What fruit does distinguish the true Christian from the false profession? Ultimately it will be a matter of humility, confession and direction. 1 John 1:8-10 explains that those that claim they have no sin or even that they have not sinned have neither God’s word or the truth in them. They are proud and their profession is false. The true Christian is marked by humility resulting in confession of sins and trust in Jesus and His promises to forgive and cleanse from all unrighteousness. It will take the involvement of others to instruct, encourage and admonish to bring out that humility and direction toward righteousness. It may even have to rise to the level of confrontation in church discipline, but true Christians love Jesus and desire to follow Him even when reluctant to give up their former beliefs and practices. That is the test of faith in 2 Corinthians 13:5. What do you believe about Jesus? Do you love Him? Will you follow Him?

Those with a false profession will remain unmoved or go the other direction and end badly. Jesus warned those in the church at Pergamum that held to the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans that they must repent or He was coming to make war against them with the sword of His mouth (Revelation 2:14-16). He warned the lukewarm in the church at Laodicea to repent or He would spit them out (Revelation 3:15-19).

Let me quickly point out from 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 that the quality of a believer’s works will be tested and judged. Humble repentance brings about greater maturity and holiness resulting in a better ending with a reward. Proud ignorance and resistance leaves the believer in continued immaturity resulting in suffering loss as his works are burned up though he himself will still be saved. That is not a bad ending since there is still salvation from sin, but it is a poor ending instead of a good one.

Many of the funerals I have officiated have been for people in this last category. I can’t really find out one way or the other about the person because profession and lifestyle do not match well. It is a poor ending when those who know you well are guessing at whether you know the Lord or are just somewhat religious.

The Fruitful.

How much better when the soil is good and the seed grows to produce a plant that bears much fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty. While the amount of fruit varies, there is no question about the nature of the plant because of the fruit it bears. Jesus makes this same point in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. Both the slave that earned ten talents and the one that earned five talents received the same commendation, *“Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.”* That is what I want to hear when I stand before the Lord, and it should be what you want to hear as well. You certainly do not want to hear the condemnation received by the slave that produced nothing from what he was given, *“Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

The apostle Paul is an obvious example of a man that was a good and faithful slave to the Lord. As he was facing imminent execution he said this in 2 Timothy 4:7-8,⁷ *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸ in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”* Paul should not in anyway be considered an exception to what should be normal for Christians since the crown of righteousness is offered to all.

The first chapter of 1 Thessalonians is the commendation of a church in which their turning from idols to serve the living and true God was obvious. Jesus commends the church at Philadelphia because though they had difficult situation, they persevered in keeping His word. Paul commends many people by name for their faith demonstrated by faithful service to the Lord - Timothy, Apollos, Stephanas, Tychicus, Aristarchus, Justus, Epaphrus, Epaphroditus, and Titus. Their lives were marked by godliness and they ended well. That should be true of every Christian and it certainly can be for you if you are faithfully walking with Christ in the present. As I mentioned earlier, I have also been blessed to oversee funerals for saints about whom multiple people testified to their godly lives and faithful service to the Lord. They lived well and ended well.

Conclusions

Will you end well? You will if you are walking well with the Lord in the present. Let that be your goal and motivation in being serious about living for Christ instead of for self or the world. Don't put off any longer changes you know that need to be made. While each of us should be ready to do that at anytime, the transition from one year to the next is a good time to consider, make and implement resolutions that will change your life so that there will not be any question that when you stand before the Lord you will hear, *“Well done, good and faithful slave . . . enter into the joy of your master.”*

*Dear Master for this coming year, Just one request I bring:
I do not pray for happiness, or any earthly thing -
I do not ask to understand, The way Thou ledest me,
But this I ask: teach me to do, The thing that pleaseth Thee.*

*I want to know Thy guiding voice, to walk with Thee each day.
Dear Master make me swift to hear, And ready to obey.
And thus the year I now begin, A happy year will be -
If I am seeking just to do, The thing that pleaseth Thee.”*

Selected

Sermon Notes - 12/31/2023
Resolved to End Well - Selected Scriptures

Introduction

_____ is precious & fleeting so we need to make the most of it (Eph. 5:16)

Foolish people do not use time _____ nor do they learn the lessons from how they have spent it

The wise are more reflective knowing that every day is an opportunity to _____ & grow.

Resolutions to become better are important, but “_____” has to be defined properly & then diligence applied

Resolutions

Since God has given us both the ability & charge to _____, then resolutions to be transformed are important

Make resolutions that will help you to make _____ changes in your life

1) The quest to _____ God Himself and walk with Him

2) The quest to _____ God in spirit and in truth

3) The quest for personal _____

4) The quest to be _____ of God for His glory

5) The quest to see others know _____ and follow him

These are encompassed in the two great _____: to love God & love your neighbor (Matt 22:37-40)

Loving God: Anything more important to you than God is an _____. Do you love God or idols?

Loving your neighbors: How you _____ reflects your level of love for them

Godliness or Worldliness: Does your manner of life reflect _____ in you or a desire for what is worldly?

In what areas & specific ways can you _____? Will you do what is needed to make those changes?

We are transformed by the renewing of our _____ through the power of the Holy Spirit

Getting Help - Members of the Body of Christ, the church, help one another to _____

Find people who are _____ that you can be vulnerable to and get help to overcome your weaknesses

Others cannot help you if you _____ or deny your problems and weaknesses

Motivations

How well will be your end? What if were today? - These are questions reflective of _____

The Foolish: young fools become _____ fools unless there is intervention

The _____ unrighteous (Rom. 1:21-32) become increasingly distant from God & more depraved

The _____ unrighteous (Rom. 2:1-16) are also disobedient to God but just not as outwardly flagrant in it

The _____ unrighteous (Rom. 2:17-29) pervert the way to God to justify their transgressions of His law

Fools continue on the same or a worse course even _____ hearing the truth (1 Cor. 2:14; Matt. 13:19)

Fools are often _____ toward what is eternally important because of focus on the immediate (Luke 12)

Proverbs 1:29-32: The life of a fool _____ end well - 2 Thess. 1:8-9.

The Fearful: Fear is a normal & proper emotion for humans, but you must fear the _____ things (Mt. 13:21)

The fear of the Lord is a _____ - Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 10:27; 14:27; 19:23; 16:6; 22:4

The fear of man brings a _____ & destruction - Prov. 29:5; Exod. 32; Ps. 34; 1 Sam. 15:24; 2 Sam. 1:2-12

The fear of _____ quickly withers the seed planted in rocky soil and is a quick path to apostasy

All who fear man more than God or love this world more than God will have a _____ end (Matt. 10:33-37)

The Fruitless: The profession does not _____ the expression (Matt. 13:22)

The _____ of the false teachers can make them easy to identify - 2 Pet. 2; 1 Tim 4:1-4; 1 John 2:19, 2 Tim 4:10

More difficult are plants so entangled in weeds you _____ which is the real fruit of the plant

True Christians can be quite a mess and sinful. The Corinthian church was “_____” - see 1 Corinthians

The fruits that distinguish true from false Christians are humility, _____ & direction - 1 John 1:8-10

True Christians love _____ & desire to follow Him even when reluctant to give up former beliefs & practices

Those with _____ professions remain unmoved or go the other direction ending badly - Rev. 2:14-16; 3:15-19

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 - a believer's work will be tested & so may end _____ but still be saved

It is a poor ending when those who know you well are _____ at whether you know the Lord or not

The Fruitful: The amount of fruit will vary, but the fruit _____ to the nature of the soil (Matt. 13:23)

2 Timothy 4:7-8 - Paul is an example of what _____ Christians should be like

Examples of those who were _____: Church at Thessalonica & Philadelphia & many individuals

Every believer should & can end well if they are faithfully walking with Christ in the _____

Conclusions

Let ending well be your goal & _____ in being serious about living for Christ instead of self

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. **Young Children** - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch.

Older Children - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down the scripture references and look them up later 2) Count how many times the term "end" is mentioned 3) Discuss with your parents the importance of walking with Jesus now if you want to walk with Him in eternity.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. How do foolish people spend their time? Why do foolish people fail to learn lessons from the past? How do wise people spend their time? How do you spend your time? Why do most people fail to carry out their resolutions if they make any? Who ultimately defines what it means to be "better"? How can making resolutions help a Christian? What resolutions should you make in each of the following areas: Knowing God; Worshiping God; Pursuing personal holiness; Being used for God's glory; Seeing others know Jesus & following Him; Loving God; Loving your neighbors; Being godly instead of worldly. How can you help others in these areas? How can other Christians help you? Who do you trust enough to be vulnerable to? The parable of the soils in Matthew 13 describes four possible responses (and ends) for each person: The fool, the fearful, the fruitless & the fruitful. What are the characteristics and outcome of each? What are the characteristics of the immoral unrighteous (Rom. 1:21-32), the moral unrighteous (Rom. 2:1-16) and the religious unrighteous (Rom. 2:17-29). Why is it a blessing to fear the Lord and a snare to fear man? Some fruitless are obviously unsaved. Why is it difficult to discern the actual spiritual condition of others who are generally fruitless? What fruits distinguish a believer from a false profession? What makes a person fruitful? What do you need to do now to ensure that you will end well?