

## Yesterday vs. Tomorrow

*Matthew*

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 6:25-34  
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**Crossroads Ministries**  
301 S. 8th Street  
Opelika, Alabama 36801

**Website:** [www.fbcopelika.com](http://www.fbcopelika.com)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers](http://www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers)

This evening, it is an honor to invite you to open your bibles to the book of Matthew 6. Now, we're walking through the book of Matthew on Sunday evenings together, but before we come to chapter 6 tonight, it is that season where we rightfully so place a little more time, a little more attention, maybe a little more focus on the gospels and the gospel story within scripture. It will be two weeks from today that we will formally celebrate the day that changed everything, the day that the tomb that held a lifeless body some 72 hours prior, was discovered not only to be empty, the stone rolled away, and two angels declaring, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

Tonight, before we get to Matthew 6, it's kind of a big picture of where we are in scripture. Obviously, the New Testament begins with the gospels. Each of the respective gospels approaches the story of the person, the life, the ministry, the death, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but as a very similar yet very distinct perspective. I don't find it odd at all that the fourth gospel, the gospel of John ends with declare that if everything Jesus said or did were all written down, all the libraries in the world cannot contain it. And we have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but we literally could have every library in the world filled just with what took place in the three and a half years of his earthly ministry that we have recorded in the gospels.

If you'll allow me to kind of work backwards for a moment, in the gospel of John, Jesus has primarily presented his deity, that he is God in the flesh. It begins that he that was in the beginning who created all things, he was all things and nothing exists apart from him. Interesting, the gospel of John only contains 7% of the material that is found in the other three gospels. Why? Because the primary intent is to show that he is distinct, that he is different, that he was, is and always will be God.

We move our way back to the gospel of Luke. We know according to Colossians 4, the Lord used a human instrument to give us the gospel of Luke who was called the beloved physician. And there we discover the humanity of Jesus. It's the longest of the gospels. Half of it is contained within what we know as the Passion Week. Half the gospel of Luke is about the last week of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. When we go to the beginning of Luke, not only does it focus on his supernatural virgin birth, but his lineage

goes all the way back to Adam, that he is not only that second Adam that 1 Corinthians 15 spoke of, but that he is wrapped in humanity.

The gospel of Mark. It's the shortest of the gospels. It's the fastest of the gospels. Contains no genealogy because it shows Jesus as a servant and a servant doesn't contain a genealogy. In fact, in Mark 10 it says, he, Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

Then there's a gospel of Matthew. Matthew is the one that begins what we know as the New Testament after 430 years of silence. The prophets are no longer being inspired. The scribes are no longer writing. Think about it, the time has been roughly the same period as the Egyptian captivity. You say, "Why is that important?" Because when we come to the scene at the time of Matthew, there is nobody that we're going to talk about tonight that would have been where we're going to talk about. There is nobody who knew anybody, who knew anybody, whoever knew anybody who was alive when the prophets were inspired to speak. 430 years of silence and yet the gospel of Matthew begins the genealogy of Jesus, the son of David. It presents him not only as the King, but the coming King.

The book of Matthew, as I've shared on Sunday evenings, is so strategic to our understanding of scripture because time after time after time, it takes these statements from the Old Testament and it brings them into the new covenant and it shows us that that which God said should never be changed, but man's interpretation and view of those things had twisted things. That's why Jesus over and over said, "It has been written, but I say to you." He wasn't changing what had already been spoken, he was trying to show them that there at that time contemporary interpretation was a twistedness of what God had originally intended.

In the gospel Matthew chapters 5 through 7 is contained, at least according to the world, the most famous sermon Jesus ever preached. This is the Sermon on the Mount. Now let me remind you before we go to chapter 6 tonight, and I think it's important to bring this up, whether you're here for the first time or you've been here every time, that the number of born-again Christians that were at the Sermon on the Mount is zero. There's not one single person who's believed on the shed blood of Jesus Christ, not one. The tomb has not even been inhabited, much less victoriously empty. Jesus is in the early days of his ministry and every single person that would have been there that day would have been at some level an individual who at some point, whether infrequently or frequently in their life, brought a series of sacrifices to a series of festivals, desiring to "be made right with God" based on making sure they got the right quantity and the right amount, at the right time, in the right place. And yet Jesus confronts them and in such a merciful caring way to show them this, that there are no amount of deeds, there's no amount of religion, there's no amount of do's and don'ts that make us right with God.

One of the things I love about the Sermon on the Mount is that in chapter 5 Jesus shows us every way that horizontally with other humanity that we mess up and we sin. In chapter 6 he shows us every way vertically that we mess up and we fall into sin, which

brings us to the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount at the end of chapter 7, he goes, "Here's two choices. You can either build your life on the Rock, or you can build your life on the shifting sand." The rains are going to come, the question is what has your life been built upon, and obviously we know because we have the totality of scripture that that Rock is Christ Jesus. So lovingly and gracefully Jesus is showing them and he is showing us that there is no amount of deeds,religiosity that can "meet the standard," that we must trust and lean upon him to be the satisfaction for our sins.

The end of Matthew 6 beginning in verse 25, we have a very important word, "therefore." Now you may have heard the old joke, you know what therefore is there for, right? It's there for a reason. We come to the conclusion of chapter 6. We've discussed our vertical relationship with the Lord in areas of prayer, areas of fasting, areas of finances, etc. Beginning in verse 25 it may be one of the most famous sections of this famous Sermon on the Mount. It says,

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? 28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? 31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Now tonight, I've entitled the message "Yesterday vs. Tomorrow." Now that's actually not what I wanted to title it so allow me to explain a little bit. I believe that these two words, this is just my humble personal and I think pretty accurate opinion, I think these are two of the most dangerous words in the English language. How often do we find ourselves trapped and in bondage due to something that happened yesterday? How often are we paralyzed because of what might befall us tomorrow? Very few of us enjoy today, live today and thrive today because we're consumed with yesterday or we're fearful of tomorrow.

Years ago, I heard a great wise commentary on these two words and I'm not trying to be a clinician here but I think it's a simple yet accurate observation. This individual said that

when you think about yesterday it leads to depression, and when you focus on tomorrow it leads to anxiety. Are those not two words that are so prevalent in our culture? If you think about someone who suffers and it's real, when they suffer with depression, typically more often than not, they are struggling with the events or the consequences of the events or the activities that have happened to or about them of days gone by. And when somebody is stressing with anxiety, it's typically about what might or might not happen in the days that are ahead and they don't know which path or what is going to "befall them." This passage tonight is primarily about tomorrow. It's primarily about anxiety. But at the same time, if you would allow me to use this simple example, if we don't trust God tomorrow, then on Tuesday we can actually fall into depression about what didn't happen on Monday. Do you see how these two words interchange themselves so frequently in our lives?

At the conclusion here of chapter 6, there are two, what I call, big therefore's. The first therefore says to trust God, and the second therefore says to take no thought what you'll eat, drink or clothing that you'll put on your body. So let's just work through these somewhat systematically.

I know that tonight is obvious. There is nothing revolutionary. There is nothing as Solomon said, new under the sun. In fact, I would daresay that you could read through this passage, look at the notes that are on the screen and say, "Yep, I've known that for years." But there's a big difference between knowing it and living it. So tonight hopefully the Lord will inspire us to live it.

Therefore trust God. Three areas in this passage that it says that we are to trust him whether it's ramifications or consequences of the past or possibilities of the future. One, and the first one is with our finances. Now I'm reminded on a regular basis in the book of Proverbs that finances are like the air. It's kind of hard to catch, isn't it? It comes and it goes and who can contain it? You know, I've joked a lot on our Tuesday morning men's Bible study that one of the things that has been such a blessing in my life in recent days is that I'm actually experiencing what I call multi-generational wisdom. You say, "multi-generational wisdom?" What that means is not necessarily a biological multi-generation, although that is occurring, but more that I am seeing how history and how the cycles of life tend to repeat themselves.

You know, today when you turn on the news, particularly when it talks about the economy and finances, it's interesting how the story is basically the same story that we had 15, 16 years ago, which was the same story we had 20 years earlier, which was the same story we had a couple of generations. In other words, we're discovering that things happen in cycles and they repeat themselves, and one thing that I've learned with a half a century of life is this: if there's one thing I can guarantee is you cannot guarantee your finances because it doesn't matter. Have you noticed that all the commercials that want you to be a part of their company for investing, they always end with some very small print and some very fast works that say basically that past results do not guarantee future possibilities. It doesn't matter what mechanism that we utilize, it doesn't matter how many

spreadsheets we can create, it doesn't matter how sure that the investment is, finances come and they go.

He makes a big point in this passage to say that when it comes to that which is the currency of our life, to allow us to ebb and to flow, we're to trust God. Second thing is we're to trust God with our life. That's a very an generic term but it's a very accurate term because last time I checked, you and I cannot guarantee that we'll get to breathe the next breath. One of the tragedies, one of the difficulties of pastoring is that I spend almost every day of my life receiving bad news when it comes to life. Health, illness. You know, one of the things about the human body is even though we can do preventative care, even though we can do annual exams, even though we can take this test and we can take that test, we do not have a mechanism in our body where the Lord gives us a two, five or a 10 minute warning of cardiac arrest, cancer diagnosis, etc. We discover that we can eat all the right foods and, by the way, you know eating all the right foods means if it doesn't taste good it's supposedly good for you. We can eat all the right food. We can do all the exercises. We can do everything that is prescribed and yet according to the book of Job 14:5, your days and my days are all in God's hands, not our medical doctors. Now I value them and you know that I'm the son of a pharmacist and I appreciate the knowledge and the wisdom of those that are in the medical field, however, there's not a one of us who can guarantee not only the investments of the future financially, but also our lives physically.

Then finally, at the end it says that we're to trust God with our eternity. Now I'm just going to state what is obvious to me and it may not be to you. It sounds somewhat rhetorical but I'm being as transparent as I can be. I don't know how people who don't know Jesus, I don't know how they go to bed at night. I really don't. I don't understand. In fact, I had the privilege just in recent days to be in kind of a small group Bible study on the book of Revelation with a group of folks, and some of you may have heard the story so just forgive me for repeating it. But I remember the '80s. I remember the political turmoil. I remember the Cold War. I remember that we were on the brink of what we were at least being told on a regular basis of nuclear annihilation. I remember those days and I stressed out about it even as a young person and I couldn't sleep in night for a lot of different reasons. And I remember I expressed my concern to my student pastor at the time. I thought he was an old man, he was in his early 30's but I was a teenager, so what did I know? And I just expressed my concern and I'll never forget the following conversation literally changed my life. He said, "Jeff, have you read the book of Revelation?" I said, "No, never read it." He said, "Here's your assignment, over the course the next week, read the book of Revelation, come back and report." Now I thought that was a big assignment. I had no idea the book of Revelation isn't near as long as I thought it was. I read the book of Revelation. I reported back. He goes, "Well, did you read it?" I said, "Read all 22 chapters." He said, "Well, what did you learn?" I said, "I don't understand anything." He said, "Seriously?" I said, "I'm telling you, I read it but I don't know what I read." And here's what he did, it was brilliant. I owe a great, just incredible debt to David for doing this. He's said, "Let me ask you a question. Does the book of Revelation end with a nuclear holocaust?" I said, "No." And he goes, "Then what are you worried about? Go to bed."

It changed my life because I realized that no matter what the pundits said, no matter what the politician said, no matter what the media said, all that they were expressing fear over isn't even a biblical reality. Every single one of us is one day going to step into eternity and I don't know how people sleep at night not knowing where they're going. I don't understand that. But in this passage, whether it be our finances which are here today and gone tomorrow, whether it be our health which is never guaranteed, or whether it be eternity that we will all spend a very long time existing in, very simple phrase, trust God.

So how does he explore that? He says take no thought for your life. Now let me balance what Jesus is saying with a multitude of other scriptures, particularly in the book of Proverbs. When Jesus says take no thought, he doesn't say hands off, it doesn't matter, just go to the woods and sing Kumbayah until he returns. What he is saying by take no thought is he's saying do not exhibit anxiety over this. Do not exhibit depression. In other words, do not consume yourself with it so much that it consumes you.

Take no thought what you'll eat, what you'll drink, or even what clothing you will place on your body. He uses two illustrations. One is that of food, and the other is that of our body and/or our stature. Now Jesus makes an interesting illustration or analogy. He says the birds of the air, they don't have barns to store it in, they don't have stores to purchase it from, they just get up every day and the Lord provides them what they need. The fowls of the air. Now the reason that's interesting is if you allow me tonight to kind of dissect that phrase, when we hear the phrase "fowls of the air," we think about the birds, particularly this season we're beginning to see more and more of them frequent the airspace of our homes and such. But do you know what's also interesting is the phrase "fowls of the air" not only applies to the birds that we enjoy as a part of the creative order, but there are places in the Bible that it refers specifically to the demonic entities.

In fact, in the book of Revelation 19, there's this famous account of a battle that we call the battle of Armageddon. I mean, it's the big one, and for those of you that have been to the Holy Land, you've seen it's 250 square miles of the ultimate battlefield. And there at this described great conflict, the Lord makes this statement in chapter 19, he says, "Let the fowls of the air come and consume the carcasses of those whose lives have been lost." And I don't think it's just speaking about the "birds of the air" because there was that great rebellion against the Lord in that specific place. You say, "Why is that important?" Because if the birds of the air and if you allow me to go there, if even the fowls of the air, even those of the demonic realm are supplied their daily need of nourishment, then how much more does God care about taking care of us?

If you allow me to use this illustration, I don't mean it's right and I don't mean it crass, but I'm just being honest. A few days ago, I found myself on the campus of Auburn University and there was a lot of kids that were walking around, but there's only one I was interested in buying lunch for. In other words, there was one who my relationship with him was such I sought him out, made it a point to intersect with him, and then went to financial means to ensure that we could spend a few moments together. Now, don't even, I didn't want anything ill or bad to happen to all the other students on campus, but

there was only one that I was really interested in. That being said, when he says if he feeds the birds of the air, the fowls of the air, how much more does he care to feed us? That means God is more interested in what goes in your belly than even the birds of the air that don't worry about it every single day.

Then there's a passage that maybe I take it a little bit personally, but it says there's nothing I can do to add any to the stature of my body. Now, I know that I often exhibit self-deprecating humor when it comes to my lack of height, but I'll never forget a couple of years ago, one of my children, I won't tell you which one, but he has an older and younger brother, one of my children came to me and he said, "Dad," he said, "man, just, you know, I can go to the gym and I can get bigger, I can do exercise and I can get faster, I just want to get taller." I said, "I'm sorry, son, that's just not going to happen." He said, "Why not?" I said, "Because the Bible says there's nothing you can do to add a cubit to your stature." By the way, a cubit is anywhere between 12 and 18 inches. Just not going to happen. It doesn't matter how often or how ardent we desire or hope for, basically what the Lord is saying is that we spend a whole lot of our time stressing, depressing, and having anxiety over things that he says, "I got this. Why are you so consumed with something you can't change, you can't fix, you can't guarantee?" Basically he's saying you and I spend a whole lot of our time worrying about a whole lot of stuff that we couldn't change even if we wanted to.

So where's the action? He says, "Wherefore, if God so clothe," then what, "shall he not so much clothe you, O ye of little faith?" And I love the analogy. He says, even Solomon in all of his regalia, can't even compare to this. Let me put that in contemporary terms. I know you know this, but there are some very wealthy people in this world, and I will confess that I help on a regular basis contribute because I'm a real fan of ordering something and two days later it shows up on the front step of my house. I'm a big fan of that, and the individual who created and propagated that company, he is worth a whole lot of money. But do you know what's interesting? All the money in his bank account is not a drop in the ocean compared to what the Lord owns. I'll tell you what I'm also another fan of. I'm a fan of the phone that's in my pocket. I really like being able to communicate with people. I like being able to text message and message each other. I like even being able to read and receive emails on my phone. And yet the frightening thing is the originator, the founder, the inventor of that device, had all the money in the world and he couldn't add another day to his life when he fell to a terminal disease.

So when the Lord says even Solomon, there's some names that you and I could throw around that not even those individuals could add or enhance, therefore, I love verse 34, take no thought. In other words, why would we waste and spend our time in that which will bear no fruit and will see no results? There's really an attitude and an action that the Lord points out in this. When he speaks about the attitude, I think it's interesting he says the Gentiles. He's talking about the lost people, the pagans, the heathens. They seek such things. And really, this is a good barometer for you and I. When our lives, and I mentioned this this morning, when our lives began to mimic the lost world, we need to get nervous and concerned. Our lives should be different than, distinct from. And yet he says that Gentiles are doing what you're doing. Why would you want your life to look

like theirs? If your life does look like theirs, then obviously you might be headed the wrong direction.

He says this statement, "Do you not know," in verse 32, "your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things." Not want but need. Because at the end of the day, aren't we all grateful everybody's got clothes on tonight? I'm grateful. We have need of them. We have need because if we don't have nourishment of food, then our life expires. Let me remind you that Adam and Eve even after they sinned in the garden of Eden, what did the Lord do? He provided clothing for them. When Ezekiel was being inspired to do that incredible message about the Israelites and their captivity and he was laying on his side for 390 days, the Lord brought him food even though he did not have what we would call immediate access.

One of the most famous verses from the mouth of Jesus in all the Bible is verse 33, "But," in other words in contrast to, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and some of these things will be added unto you." I purposely just seeing if you're awake. "And all these things." What's it saying as far as our attitude is concerned? I'm going to ask you a rhetorical question, somewhat of a proposition. I'm not going to infer your issues but allow me to do so as an illustration. I would be willing to say because I understand humanity because I am one, that every single one of us, if we could, could probably write down or chronicle at least several hours, if not several days, or for some of you months, that you have wasted worrying about things you can't change. Correct? Now some of you might be saying, "I got years, pastor." Can you imagine all those wasted minutes, hours, months, years, whatever, if you did what verse 33 says, that you spent that time focusing on your relationship with the Lord and allow him to address that which you can't change by worrying about it. Because we can't add a stature to our height. We can't add a day to our life and we cannot guarantee how the finances and the food of our life are going to end up.

And yet he says if you'll seek first the kingdom of God all of these things will be added unto you. In fact, I would say it is a rare day, I would say I don't know of any day where I've met someone who is in need of these things who said, "Pastor, I just don't understand it. I love the Lord God with all my heart, with all my soul. I spend so much time with him and he just doesn't provide." In fact, can I tell you what we typically experience when it comes to what we call benevolence issues? Someone who is struggling with clothing, struggling with food, struggling with some of these things, the typical response we get, not all the time but typical is, "You know, I really do need to focus more on the things of the Lord. I've been focusing too much on this stuff." And funny how focusing on that stuff didn't ever produce that stuff.

So what's the action? "Take no thought for tomorrow," meaning don't be consumed with what you can't fix, "for the morrow shall take care of itself," I love this statement, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." In other words, no matter how much time and energy that we spend today concerned about how to solve issues of tomorrow, there's nothing that energy is going to do to actually change the things that we can't change. There's not one of you right now that can guarantee that the investment market is going to do what people say today it's going to do tomorrow. There's not one of you, and we saw



this in the last three years, that can guarantee that the supply chain of food products is going to get where it's from to where it's supposed to be tomorrow. There's not one of us and not one of us can guarantee that any of us will be here tomorrow. It doesn't matter what our stage, it doesn't matter what our age. In fact, I listened to a pastor some years ago that made a wise observation. He said one of the problems with humanity is that we presume who's old and who's young. And I want you to think about this analogy, take a 75 year old individual, according to our culture they're somewhat on the more mature side, correct? But what if the Lord has 20 more years of life ahead for them? They're really kind of young. You take a 32 year old, we think they're young, but what if the Lord only has three more years for them? Then they're old. And so we cannot determine, we cannot judge today what we cannot change our fix for tomorrow.

As we conclude chapter 6, I want to share the story that occurred in a dear friend of mine's life some years ago. It was an individual well-educated, hard worker, had made a good living for his family, his wife and for his children, even had a good reputation within the community. Basically for the car guys, he was firing on all all eight cylinders. I mean, everything was kind of clicking the way it needed to go. And then he found himself with a business partner that for a lack of better terms, did him wrong and he found himself liable for an incredible amount of financial resources that he didn't have. Over the process of kind of putting all that together, it ended up making its way to court, and as you can imagine, the tone of the story, the judge did not decide in his favor. Here was a man, been married for some years, had children that were growing up in his home, driving from the courthouse to his house and his own words, he said, "It's not that I had nothing, I now had less than nothing." He said, "I now owed more than I'd ever made." He said, "I didn't know what to do." He said, "How do I go home and tell my wife we're in this position? How do I tell my kids that all the dreams that we had for them have just been removed by the drop of a gavel?"

He shared the story with me that right before he got to his house, there was somewhat of a hill and there was a stop sign at the bottom. It was one of those kind of back roads where not a whole lot of people travel. He said he was probably two blocks away from his home about to have one of the hardest conversations he'd ever had with his wife and his kids about the reality of their tomorrow. He said, "I was a grown man, but I was weeping uncontrollable. I didn't know how, what do you say?" He said, "I was just weeping and I was weeping. I was weeping." He goes, "I did not want to even push the accelerator because I knew that once I started, I had to have the conversation." And he said, "Even though it wasn't audible," he said, "it felt like it was." He said, "Here's what I heard God say, you trust me with your soul but you don't trust me with your finances?"

Now let me relate that story to your life. You're trusting Jesus for heaven but not your health? You're trusting Jesus for heaven but not with your kids? You're trusting Jesus for heaven but not with your investments? You're trusting Jesus with heaven but not your relationships? I could go on. Essentially the illustration and Jesus said it so clearly is, if we're willing to stake our eternity on his shed blood and his empty tomb, then why do we waste our time worrying about these things that, as he said later, is one day in the body and the next day in the draught. Yes, we exercise discipline. Yes, we exercise fortitude. But when he says give no thought here, why would we waste our time about that which

we cannot change in an area that he says, "I've got this. If I can save your soul, I think I can handle this."

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Tonight as we come to this "time of decision," I know it's Sunday night but you may be that soul tonight that said, "I've never trusted Jesus. I've never asked him to save my soul. I've never asked him to forgive me of my sins. I've never trusted in his accomplished work of the cross and his victory over the grave." Maybe tonight's that night where you call out to him as Romans 10 says, you just call out for him to save you. Maybe tonight you've already, that's already been a reality in your life. Maybe there's an area of obedience. Maybe there's an area of discipline the Lord has called you to. Maybe tonight as we prepare to have a time of response, it may not be about stepping out and stepping forward, so before I pray, nobody's looking around, I'm not even going to look at you, let me ask you a question: if you're trusting Jesus with your eternity, and you're trusting Jesus with your soul, what's the area that you're struggling with trusting him on? You don't need to say it out loud, you don't need to raise your hand, but you know what it is. Maybe tonight is the night that we put as much trust in that area as we do in eternity.

*Lord Jesus, tonight as we come to this time of response, thank you. Thank you that when we fret and we fuss and we worry, that you simply say, "Have no thought for tomorrow for a sufficient is the evil thereof of today." God, help us not to just trust you for eternity, but to trust you each and every day. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*