

The Title of the sermon this morning is - What should I do with TODAY?

If we look at Psalm 118:23-24 David tells us what we should be thinking about today.

He says: This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Then David Continues on in his dialog about our relationship with God.

26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

27 The Lord is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us.

28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you.

29 Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

Doesn't reading those words of David bring contentment to your heart knowing that God cares for you and has given you this day to use for His purposes.

David also alludes to the coming of Jesus in this Psalm in verses 22 and 23.

22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.[b]

23 This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

Jesus was rejected by the Jews and was thrown away by them, but even though the Jews rejected Jesus, God made Him the cornerstone in building the plan of Salvation for us.

Two Sundays ago I talked about the importance of works after salvation, where we use the gifts and talents that God has given us to Honor and Glorify this awesome God that we worship. As a result we should spend part of this day that the Lord has made, in strengthening our relationship with Him. We should use the gift of each day He gives us, in thanksgiving, prayer, listening for His response and studying His word. We should spend part of our day doing things (works) for His honor and glory because we love Him. We should be aware that this life that we are now living is but preparation for Eternal Life in whatever realm we choose as we live on this earth. Let's look at scripture and see what the Bible says about how God disposes and rewards each person based on the choices that we make

during each day that God gives to us. Remember, each day of our life is a gift from God and he expects us to use it for His honor and glory. I think if we really understood what God has eternally planned for us, we would make some significant changes in how occupy each day that we live.

If we were to try to graphically represent the proportionality of where we will spend our conscious existence it might be something like this. (Draw the dot and line example) This is important. What we do in the dot of our existence here on earth, determines what path our eternal line follows.

Now that we have established the proportionality of life on earth vs eternity, let's look for a few minutes at this long line of eternity and what can happen there.

There seems to be a lot of people who know very little about heaven and what it will be like. Perhaps just the fact that, if we have trusted in Jesus for our salvation, and we will be with Him for eternity is sufficient for most. But it seems to me that if heaven will be our eternal home, we would want to know as much as we can about what the Bible has to say about this place where we will live forever. As a matter of fact if everyone living today really understood what the two eternal choices are, I suspect the many lives would be significantly changed as they would contemplate the hopelessness of the place of punishment vs the amazing glory of the place of rewards.

First we find that for most of us, if we die before Christ returns, Heaven will come in two stages. Jesus told the story about the first stage of what currently happens when we die, in Luke 16:19-31. Entitled, The Rich Man and Lazarus. We find that there are two entirely different scenarios in this story depending on how we choose to use these short years of days that God provides for us on this earth. Let's read what Jesus said.

[19] "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.

[20] And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,

[21] who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

Now notice in the next verse the significant difference in how these two men are dispositioned.

[22] The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried,

[23] and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

Notice the significant differences here, The saved man was carried by angels to paradise to be with the Lord and the rich man was buried. The saved man found himself in a place of contentment with Father Abraham at his side. The rich man found himself in a place of torment.

Well let's follow on to the next part of Jesus story

[24] And he (the Rich Man) called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'

Now the torment of the Rich Man (unsaved person) was so great that he just requested a drop of water from the end of Lazarus' finger to momentarily cool his tongue. Think about that! Just a drop of water to bring momentary relief from the heat of torment. And think about this, he could see Lazarus enjoying the blessings of paradise and realizes that he could have been with Lazarus in paradise if he had made better choices during his God given days, here on earth. He realizes it to the point that later in the story he begs someone to go back and warn his five brothers to change their ways so they will not have to endure the eternal torment that he is in.

Abraham addresses the rich man's request.

[25] But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

[26] And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'

God has fixed it such that there will be no back and forth movement. Once a person's eternal home is determined there is no "do over".

Next is where the rich man realized that his earthly choices got him to this place of torment.

[27] And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send Lazarus to my father’s house—
[28] for I have five brothers —so that he may warn them, lest they also come into
this place of torment.’

[29] But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’

[30] And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead,
they will repent.’

[31] He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they
be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Of course we realize that Jesus told us about all of this. That He was crucified and returned from the dead and still there is the overwhelming majority of people that are not convinced about the extreme significance and eternal finality of our choices during our short time (DOT) existence on this earth that determines our existence during the long line of eternal life.

Where Do Unbelievers Go When They Die? As we’ve seen, Old Testament and New Testament believers immediately enter the presence of the Lord when they die. They are very much alive and aware that they are in a place we refer to as paradise as they await the creation and revelation of a new heaven and new earth, in which they will reside for eternity. This new heaven and new earth will become the home of the saved when Christ returns for the second time and the saved receive their new eternal glorious resurrected bodies. We will examine all this in just a few minutes.

Why do we think that when we die we immediately come into the presence of Jesus. Well let’s look at what Paul says in the Bible says about this.

2 Corinthians 5:4 (NIV)

[4] For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Paul is comparing living in our earthly bodies to the temporary dwelling of living in a tent. We are just camping out in our earthly body (tent) waiting for our final home with the Lord. Paul continues -

[5] Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

The Bible indicates that God's providing the Holy Spirit to the saved is a deposit, a down payment, the earnest money, of God's guarantee of our eternal home with Him. Paul continues.

[6] Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. [7] We live by faith, not by sight. [8] We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. [9] So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. [10] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Paul indicates that the saved have just two options. We are either at home in the body, living in our temporary earthly tent and away from the Lord, or we are away from the body, left our temporary tent behind in the grave, and present with the Lord.

Do you realize what that means, when the saved are living in their temporary earthly tent we have God's Holy Spirit living inside us to guarantee that when we leave the tent we go immediately into the presence of the Lord. What a guarantee. What a promise to look forward to. But remember, that promise is just to the saved, the ones who believe in Jesus, and are trusting in God's grace to apply the blood of Jesus to our lives and thus covers us with the saving righteous blood of Christ. But remember, going to be with Jesus in paradise when we leave this tent is also temporary. God and Jesus are creating a New Heaven and a New Earth where we will spend eternity with them, after Jesus comes the second time. We will talk about that in a bit.

Well that pretty well defines what happens to the saved when they die. They are escorted into Paradise to be with the Lord.

But what happens to unbelievers when they die? According to Jesus's story of the rich man and Lazarus, they are immediately dispatched to hades—a place of unbearable pain and agony (torment). Hades is the immediate, but temporary, destination of the unsaved. I said temporary, because the Bible relates what happens to Satan and the unsaved at the final days after Christ's return.

In Revelation 20:1 the Bible says:

[20:1] And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. [2] He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. [3] He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

Then in Revelation 20:7 (NIV) the story continues.

Satan's Doom

[7] When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison [8] and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. [9] They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. (That would be Jerusalem), But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. [10] And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown.

And according to Revelation that was a thousand years before.

They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

I love the part where fire comes down from heaven and destroys the evil plans of Satan. I like to think that perhaps Jesus just went Pfft and evil was gone. It signifies the awesome power that our God has. After all He just spoke the words and creation happened.

Now that evil has been destroyed, those that practiced evil and those that rejected Christ's sacrifice will be judged.

The Dead Are Judged In Revelation 20:11 it says,

[11] Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. [12] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. [13] The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. [14] Then death and Hades were thrown

into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. [15] If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The lake of fire is the second death for the unsaved. They were born once when they left their mother's womb and they die twice once in earthly death and again in what the Bible calls the second eternal death when they are cast into the Lake of Fire.

So for the unsaved, it doesn't matter how hard you tried or how hard you worked. All of that was recorded in the books showing the deeds of your life. None of that matters in the final judgement of the unsaved. If your name wasn't written in the Lamb's book of life, The Journal of the Saved, your eternal final destination is the Lake of Fire along with Satan. So that pretty well wraps up God's eternal disposition of the unsaved.

Let's move back to what happens to the saved which are indwelt by God's Holy Spirit. Remember what we said earlier about going to be with Jesus when we leave this earthly tent and go to Paradise being temporary. We said that God and Jesus are creating a New Heaven and a New Earth where we will spend eternity with God and Jesus, after Jesus comes the second time.

Here is what Peter has to say about what will happen to the saved during the last days.

2 Peter 3:3 (NIV)

[3] First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. [4] They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." [5] But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. [6] By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.

Peter here is referencing the flood in Noah's time where the unsaved inhabitants of the earth were destroyed by water. Today our rainbow is the evidence that God will never destroy the earth's inhabitants with water again. But Peter continues on saying that God will use fire in the final destruction of our current earth.

In 2 Peter 3:7 he says. By the same word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

[8] But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. [9] The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God is waiting to give others the chance to repent and come to Christ.

[10] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Listen to what it says. Everything old and tarnished by sin will be destroyed by fire. Peter continues -

[11] Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives [12] as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. [13] But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

[14] So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

Peter presents all of the saved with quite a challenge. I repeat what Peter says:

You ought to live holy and godly lives [12] as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. [13] But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

[14] So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

Peter says we should strive to be found Spotless, Blameless and At Peace with God because we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the eternal home of righteousness. That's what we ought to do with TODAY.

Let's look at how the Book of Revelation wraps it up for the saved.

Revelation chapters 21 and 22 tell us what the saved have to look forward to as their final eternal home. I'd like to read both chapters but to conclude let's just read a few verses that I have chosen.

Revelation 21:1 (NIV)

Revelation 21

The New Jerusalem

[21:1] Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. [2] I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. [3] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. [4] He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

[5] He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

[6] He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. [7] He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

[22] I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. [23] The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. [24] The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. [25] On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. [26] The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. [27] Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 22

The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. [4] They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. [5] There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

Jesus Is Coming

[12] "Behold, I am coming soon! My **reward** is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. [13] I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

[14] “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city

[20] He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

[21] The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

If you remember, the title of this sermon is “What should I do with TODAY” The words of Peter pretty well spell that out. [13] In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

[14] So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

If you are saved, have put your trust in Christ, then look at what is coming for your eternity. An eternal home with God. If you are not saved today, what are you waiting for. What you do in the dot (Your life on earth), with what Christ did on the cross for you, determines which eternal path you travel. What **are** you waiting for??

I just read a few excerpts from chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation so I’m giving each of you homework. Read Chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation and see if it doesn’t change your life. I have a handout to make it easy for you. I’ll say it one more time. If you are not saved, what are you waiting for. God is still waiting for you to come to Him.

Let’s Pray