

What Matters

Simple Thoughts: Part 3 “What Matters”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – August 30th, 2020

13th Sunday After Pentecost

Readings: Proverbs 22:1-9, 1 Timothy 6:3-10, Matthew 6:19-24

Reflection: Psalm 112

Greeting: May the grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you on this day! I pray that as we join together in worship, in whatever way we join together, that we be united by one Spirit, serving the Father, in the truth of the Son. Let us celebrate the love of Christ that brings us together in God’s care. Praise the Lord!

Prayer: Lord, hear our prayer. Help us to be one people, following you. Let our hearts be warmed by your love. Let our spirits be lifted by your presence. Let us always live a life dedicated to you. Help us this day to join together that we may worship in the grace and peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 112

Praise the Lord! Happy are those who fear the Lord, who greatly delight in his commandments. Their descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever. They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and righteous. It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice. For the righteous will never be moved; they will be remembered forever. They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord. Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes. They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor; their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honor. The wicked see it and are angry; they gnash their teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.

(Psalm 121 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 112 and we hear about generosity. We hear about dealing with others with mercy and justice. That God will affirm and strengthen the righteous. That the Lord builds up the heart of those that help others. How do you share in your blessings with others?

How do you show God's generosity to others? How do you reflect it in your own life? Do you share it in your heart? Does it move you in your prayers? In your actions?

Prayer: Oh Lord, we seek your help on this day. Help us to be generous in all that we have and all that we are. Help us to accept your generosity in our lives. Grant us knowledge of what truly matters in your eyes and help us to live a life of love. Be the calm in every storm and the rest after every journey. Guide us so that we may follow you in all that we are and all that we do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the Common English Bible. Our first reading is from Proverbs chapter 22, verses 1 through 9.

A good reputation is better than much wealth; high esteem is better than silver and gold. The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord made them both. Prudent people see trouble and hide, while the simpleminded go right to it and get punished. The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord is wealth, honor, and life. Thorns and nets are in the path of the crooked; those who guard their lives keep their distance. Train children in the way they should go; when they grow old, they won't depart from it. The wealthy rule over the poor; a borrower is a slave to a lender. Those who sow injustice will harvest evil; the rod of their fury will come to an end. Happy are generous people, because they give some of their food to the poor.

(Proverbs 22:1-9 CEB+)

Our next reading is from 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 3 through 10.

If anyone teaches anything different and doesn't agree with sound teaching about our Lord Jesus Christ and teaching that is consistent with godliness, that person is conceited. They don't understand anything but have a sick obsession with debates and arguments. This creates jealousy, conflict, verbal abuse, and evil suspicions. There is constant bickering between people whose minds are ruined and who have been robbed of the truth. They think that godliness is a way to make money! Actually, godliness is a great source of profit when it is combined with being happy with what you already have. We didn't bring anything into the world and so we can't take anything out of it: we'll be happy with food and clothing. But people who are trying to get rich fall into temptation. They are trapped by many stupid and harmful passions that plunge people into ruin and destruction. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some have wandered away from the faith and have impaled themselves with a lot of pain because they made money their goal.

(1 Timothy 6:3-10 CEB+)

Our final reading is from Matthew, chapter 6, verses 19 through 24.

"Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and

rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

"The eye is the lamp of the body. Therefore, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how terrible that darkness will be! No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

(Matthew 6:19-24 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We pick up this week with the next of our *Simple Thoughts* series. This last week caused me to reflect a little bit more on the idea of what matters, what really is important in life. Truthfully, we often prioritize completely the wrong things in life. We get mixed up on what really does matter. Our main reading today is our gospel reading from Matthew. In Matthew, the treasures we are told to collect are not earthly treasures, not the things that will rust, rot, and wear away. No, we are to seek treasures in heaven. The question quickly becomes "then what are those?" What do we treasure if not our things and the pursuit of more things and more money? We get one of those very well-known quotes at the end of our reading. "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." A few things stood out in this. One is that it doesn't say you can't *be* wealthy, but you can't *serve* wealth. One might wonder what the difference is, and we get some of the highlights built up in our other readings today. In 1st Timothy, we get the notion that godliness is where we can profit and that being content is to be sought after. Sometimes we misuse content for just accepting everything and where you're at. But I don't think that is what it is really saying here. Chasing after things is big focus. Like chasing after more and more money, after more and more stuff, that the pursuit is the problem. We are reminded that we came into the world with no clothes on our backs, no wallets in our hands. We are also told that when we are trying to get rich that it causes us to do stupid things. I think that's true. Not just in the usual idea of unethical or criminal activity to get wealthy, which is of course wrong. But we do stupid things to ourselves and others when we chase wealth. We also get another one of those big quotes at the end of this reading. "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." It is interesting that it is not having money that is evil, it is the love of money. When you start to put money, possession, things, over others and over God, it becomes a trap. We wander in and get stuck. We are always wanting more and refuse to be content with what we have in the moment. I say in the moment, because too often we use this as a way to justify keeping the poor poor. Saying everyone should be happy with what they have and not taking into account that what they have isn't enough to survive. It also shouldn't be used to say that you should never look to have any kind of gain. It isn't saying that in this text either, that you should be content and without ambition. No, it is saying that if you are trying to gain simply because you love the money, you aren't really gaining anything. The last part of Timothy really shows that when you make money your goal, you end up with pain and little faith.

So, what is the goal? I'd have to say, "to live a good life." And then I remembered Proverbs. Proverbs can be difficult to preach from, because it's full of one liners. Most of the statements can often stand completely alone and may not directly relate to the lines around it. Almost like someone just standing there giving you little wisdom nuggets. But the section today revolves around a theme and helps lay out what those heavenly treasures are. It talks about what real wealth is. A good reputation, being known as a good Godly person. What does that mean? It means you share. That you aren't into crooked dealings, but you give freely. Be generous. Be happy with the blessings you have and share those blessings that others are blessed. Again, we come to the last line of our reading in this section "Happy are generous people, because they give some of their food to the poor."

I started thinking about all these things in the concept of trying to figure out what matters. What do you think of when you think about the people you admire? I can't think of anyone that I wanted to be like because they were good at getting a bunch of money or had a fancy car. When we remember people, we remember the things they did and the things they said, and the ways they were kind. Kids don't grow up thinking about the cash value of the various things they get. The thing I hear and remember myself are the shared experiences. Being taught a lesson, sharing in a story, playing a game, being together, really together. And in some ways, that's been difficult in these times. How do we connect when we aren't supposed to be in proximity?

So, thinking about this I had to think about my sister. Why? I usually hang out with my sister every week. We enjoy each other's company and she helps out with the kids. It got hard for a while there. We had to find new ways to hang out. So, now, every week I set aside time specifically to put on my headset and connect with her. It doesn't really matter what we talk about because the important part is that we connect. But it isn't just me. See, she's also stayed connected with the kids. They will call her up on their tablet to talk with her and sit and chat. Sometimes about nothing. Often times about nothing. Sometimes they play games together. But she's present. They look forward to talking to her, not because it will result in a new gift, but because she pays attention.

Maybe now, more than ever, those little things count for a lot. Picking up the phone and calling a friend to just say "hey, how's it going? How are you? Is there anything I can do for you?" That phrase in itself, "is there anything I can do for you?" is one of the most Christian things that can come out of our mouths. Because even if the answer is no, they know that you were concerned enough to offer. That you took the time to find out. It shows care and compassion. And it shows what matters. That you showed somebody that they mattered. I've been thinking about that a lot. Who are the people you think of when you think about the people who care? When they check in with you, they genuinely want to know how you are? That they want to know what has been happening in your life both good and bad. Who are the people who listen? Do we thank them? Are we thankful for them? Because I think that those heavenly treasures are showing others kindness and compassion, showing grace and mercy, being generous. Generous with what we have to share, generous with our time, generous with our feelings. I can't think of anyone who has never had a rough patch. Are you the person

others feel they can talk to about their problems and feel better, not because you can solve them, not because you can purchase a solution, but because you listened? I think about those little human interactions and those kindnesses that we see so often in Christ. Maybe you can't heal the sick, but maybe you can comfort. Maybe you can be the person to let somebody rant when they just need to get it out. Because I think we all know that sometimes just knowing that we've said it to someone is enough. That someone has heard us.

I think that is what really matters. At the heart of things, it isn't what we make and accumulate, it's how much we can give. How much we can give to anyone. And how much we are willing to receive. And I think it's important right now that we recognize just what that can mean to someone. We remember that our words matter. We need to build up treasures. Treasures of memory. Treasures of experience. Not just in ourselves, but we build them up in others, creating a wealth in their hearts. That we see the kindness and compassion that Christ shows to others and we show it. That we see the generosity and the love in Christ, and we show it to others. I think that is what it really comes down to. Are we focused on caring for each other and living the best today we have? Or are we always worried about building up for tomorrow and for the sake of building up? We must take hold of today. Say what you think you might say tomorrow and say it today. Compliment someone today and build up a treasure in their heart. Tell someone how thankful you are to have them in your life. And thank God that they are in your life. And thank God for all that you have and all that you can give. Let Christ be the guide that shows you how good life is, and be the one to show others Christ reflected in your life. By being the person others want to talk to. By being the one others want to listen to. By being known as generous, we show the kind of life the Christ offers to all. That our presence is not focused on the next thing we'll get, but on simply being in the moment. That our focus is on the next person we can help. And maybe if we all lived a life like that, following Christ in all that we are, the whole world would know what really matters. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed in the weekly update. If you are interested in online giving, please contact me. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: We go forth now that we may be ministers of the good news wherever we go. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Until we meet again. **Amen.**

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Bill Calvert	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Nancy Sowers
Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells
Tricia Adkins	Ty Bradley	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen	Pat Nebel
Don Stewart	Earlene Shupe	Brenda Hurt	Anne Winkler Heinrichs
Robert Fryman	Ken Bushur	Brad Winnett	Randy Callahan
Tommy Jester			
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne & Charlotte Carrell
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Lois Woolever	Mary White	Nick Nichols
Family of Novella Claiborn	Leo Smith		
Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte	Lyle Whitley		

Offerings may be mailed to your local treasurer or addressed to:

Rev Camron D St.Michael

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

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Our Current Series – Simple Thoughts

I have had some time to reflect during the past few months and decided to put some of those thoughts down as a series. In it we will look at anxiety, stress,

August 9th – *The Better Part* – A look at how anxiety can cause us to miss out on life when we aren't paying attention to what is important.

August 16th – *The Back of the Boat* – It is important to take time to lessen the stresses in our lives.

August 30th – *What Matters* – When we begin to think about what really matters, we often have to look at the things that get in the way.

September 6th – *A Little Trust* – It is easy to have doubts. The important thing is that we learn how to trust.

8/30/2020 Update from Pastor Cameron

Greetings! Time for a weekly update!

We are continuing in both online and in person worship at this time. I am thankful for all of the work that everyone has done to make this possible. As we return to in person worship, please contact me for details or see prior weekly updates for all of the current safety precautions.

Also know that if things continue to get worse, we may see restrictions tighten, which could change how we are doing worship. We have already seen other surrounding areas begin to be under scrutiny, and cases have not been in a good trend here. If there is anything you'd like to see change in the video, print, or in person worship, please let me know. I'm always open to suggestions or new ideas.

We will begin working on Charge Conference soon. I will be trying to get those forms printed and available soon and will be making calls soon to schedule meetings. Charge conference will likely be online this year, as I believe that everyone that is interested should have access remotely as long as a dial in option is available.

I am also asking that if you have been checking in on people, please let me know. I appreciate any updates and welcome any help in identifying anyone that needs to hear from me. Getting everything done from week to week can begin to wipe away many hours of the day, and I do not always get around to all the calls I would like to make. If you can help me with keeping informed on how everyone is doing and who may need attention, I appreciate that help. Any additions to the prayer list can be sent to me using any of the contact info below.

There are copies of the Upper Room available in Greenup in the box and at Cottonwood. You can also find the current issue online. The new Sunday school quarterly is also in the box for whoever is interested.

I will be continuing to have our worship services online and in print! A printed copy of the service including the weekly sermon will be available online and in print. The sermon audio will be uploaded weekly as well. If you'd like to be updated when it is available, it is on Spotify, Google Play, and iTunes. I will also post updates to the church Facebook pages every week. If anyone you know is not getting a copy and would like one mailed, please let me know. I am trying to get them mailed out weekly.

Also, in this time we are still working to keep the bills paid, our missions supported, our apportionments met, and our outreach working. As such, we do need your continued financial support as part of the church. Offerings may be sent to your local treasurer or to the PO Box listed below. I can also arrange to pick them up if I am delivering anything to you. I am personally grateful for all your continued support in this difficult time. I cannot stress enough that the church is still active and we are still together.

Please see the CDC website for information on the Coronavirus.

Please stay safe. You are all in my prayers. I will keep you updated as best I can. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Church Council Chair or myself.

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