

The Lord's Message: Living for God

Date: April 28, 2024

Where: Tilghman Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: 1 Peter 4:1-11

A beautiful hymn written by Thomas O Chisholm is titled "Living for Jesus." Thomas had no formal education but became a teacher at the age of 16 and associate editor of the local newspaper at the age of 21. In 1893, at the age of 31, he became a Christian through the ministry of Henry Clay, founder of Asbury College and Seminary in Wilmore, Ky. In 1903, he was ordained a Methodist pastor, but he only served one appointment before becoming ill. He eventually relocated his family to Vineland, NJ for recovery. He had never written a poem or hymn until Harold Lowden asked him to take one of his hymns and make the text stronger. Thomas refused, but Harold kept after him. The text of the hymn was strengthened, and the title changed to "Living for Jesus." When Thomas passed away in 1960 at the age of 94, he had written over 1200 poems and many of these were set to music. Let me read the lyrics of this beautiful hymn.

Living for Jesus a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior,
I give myself to Thee,
For Thou, in Thy [redemption],*
Didst give Thyself for me;
I own no other Master,
My heart shall be Thy throne,
My life I give, henceforth to live,
O Christ, for Thee alone.

Living for Jesus who died in my place,
Bearing on Calv'ry my sin and disgrace;
Such love constrains me to answer His call,
Follow His leading and give Him my all.

Living for Jesus wherever I am,
Doing each duty in His holy name;
Willing to suffer affliction and loss,
Deeming each trial a part of my cross.

Living for Jesus through earth's little while,
My dearest treasure, the light of His smile;
Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem,
Bringing the weary to find rest in Him.

Peter is talking to the churches in Northern Asia Minor who are being persecuted and is also talking to us this morning. He is telling us how we should be living for God. How we live for God makes all the difference in this world and the next.

Let us pray.

First, in verse 1, Peter says that we should have the same commitment that Jesus Christ had when He endured the suffering on the cross for us. Jesus talks about this commitment in **Matthew 16:24**. We must have this same commitment by taking up our cross and not looking back. The foundation of this commitment is the attitude that Jesus has. Paul describes this attitude in **Philippians 2:5-11**. Jesus humbled Himself to God's will. Jesus accepted God's will and accepted our sins past, present, and future on the cross.

This commitment of Jesus changes our view on sin. Sin is detestable to us. We do not want to have anything to do with sin. We want to grow and become more like Jesus. Peter describes the change of our view towards sin in verse 2. We do not live by earthly desires but by the will of God. John Wesley would describe this as moving toward perfection. We do not do this on our own, but it is the gift of the Holy Spirit working in us that Jesus mentions in **John 16: 13-15**.

The Holy Spirit brings us the wisdom of God. Verse 3 describes the evil of the flesh. All of us have spent time involved with the evil of the flesh, but we have grown to see that this only leads us to sin. While we have grown in wisdom, our friends and our family may not have. They will continue to encourage us to indulge in these practices and when we do not, they will heap abuse on us, as it says in verse 4. They might say something like, you think you are too good for us now that you have God in your life. We might need to distance ourselves from them, so that we do not fall back into sin.

Peter goes on to say in verse 5 that they will have to give an account for themselves on judgement day. They might think that they are good people, at least by world standards. They will sadly find out that all the good that they have done will be worthless. They will find that they are sinners, just like you and me. Only by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ will they be saved. That will be a sad day for them.

In verse 6, Peter says this is why God wants the Gospel to be told to everyone, even the righteous dead. The righteous dead is a person who thinks that they are a good person. God will judge all of us, which is why we should live not by the world's standards, but by the Holy Spirit.

Now every one of us should be aware that we are living in the last days. Peter says in verse 7, “the end of all things is near.” I cannot tell you when Jesus is coming back. Unfortunately, many Christians who believe that Jesus is coming soon based on prophecy charts and worldly events fail to apply that belief in a proper way. They fail to apply themselves to more diligent prayer. We must give ourselves to serious praying. Not just when we feel like it, but to be constantly seeking the will of God. Paul tells us how to be serious in praying in **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**. We should be constantly in prayer with God. We should be constantly in communication with God, so that we can know what God’s will is and do it.

Not only are we to be in prayer, but our actions should show that we are prepared for Jesus to return. First our actions should be of love. Peter says in verse 8 that we are to love others deeply, because love does cover a multitude of sins including both the sins of the one showing love and the one being loved. Theologian Grudem says, “Where love abounds in a fellowship of Christians, many small offenses, and even some large ones, are readily overlooked and forgotten. But where love is lacking, every word is viewed with suspicion, every action is liable to misunderstanding, and conflicts abound – to Satan’s perverse delight.”

This results in love showing itself in hospitality. Peter says in verse 9. We should do this without grumbling or complaining.

This love will cause us to use our gifts to serve others as Peter says in verse 10. We are to be faithful stewards of the gifts that God has given us. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15:10**, that he was what he was only by God’s grace. At the same time, His grace toward him (Paul) was not in vain. In other words, Paul was given new life by God. In return God demanded that Paul preach the Gospel message to the Gentiles. Jesus gave His life for us. We in return are to give to Jesus all that we have and all that we are. This would show that we are good stewards of God’s grace. The opposite is true. If we are bad stewards of God’s grace, we will not give ourselves for the work of the Lord. Then that grace will be wasted, because it only comes to us and does not move through us.

Peter says in verse 11 that God has provided each one of us with supplies for us to minister. Every part is necessary. Everybody has been given a job by God to complete. God has supplied everyone with what they need to complete the job that God has given them. Even the smallest or least important part of the body is important. A man was rebuilding the engine on his lawn mower. When he completed the task, he had one small part left. He started the mower. It started up and ran fine. At least that is what he thought, until he went to shut it off and the mower would not turn off. That small part was needed to turn off the engine. It was a very important part. Everybody is important in the body of Christ.

We are not called to ministry in our own strength, but in God’s strength. Peter tells us this in verse 11.

Jesus is coming back. All of us are living in the end times. I do not know when Jesus is coming back, but we need to be prepared for His return. We start by allowing Jesus into our hearts. Jesus will give us the gift of the Holy Spirit to reveal our sins. We grow in perfection by confessing those sins and asking Jesus to forgive us. We gain wisdom to understand that these sins are detestable to us. Even though others may not think so, we no longer want to commit these sins. We tell people the Good News to prepare them for Jesus' return. We are in constant communication with God, through our serious prayers. We love deeply. We offer hospitality without grumbling. We use the gifts that God has given to minister to others. All of us are equipped by God for ministry. We are to be good stewards and use those gifts. We are to speak what God tells us to speak. When we serve, we serve in the strength that God provides. This is all done to the glory and praise of God through Jesus Christ.

That my friends, is how we live for God, preparing for Jesus' return. Together we grow in faith. Amen.