

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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“Do Not be Afraid, Little Flock”

“..your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom”

Life can get complicated! Problems arise; some obstacles seem almost insurmountable. There's financial concerns, health concerns, family concerns, job concerns, societal concerns and educational concerns. Pity the poor fellow who is so buried in the rubbish of the world that this is all his life amounts to; struggling against one concern after the other; his greatest goal being to take care of the problem at hand knowing that more are on the way tomorrow.

No wonder so many people are frustrated with their lives. In fact, many tend to make heroes out of some of the most unheroic figures. More lament occurs at the passing of a spoiled celebrity due to an overdose than a soldier defending the rights and freedoms of others.

Jesus never lost an opportunity to let His light shine in a dark place. He insisted that our lives need not to be filled with fear, cynicism and uncertainty. There is a better way to live, but it takes a clear perspective, courage and faith. The Sermon on the Mount is just about that (Luke 12:22-24).

The Value of Life

"For life is more than food, and the body than clothing." (Luke 12:23). What a shame that so many have reduced their lives to the point of meaningless. To deny the spiritual side of ourselves and to begin to measure life by material things possessed. Life becomes absurd, and not worth very much, when its value is reduced to measuring it by such a materialistic standard.

Jesus insisted that life is more than that. We do not live to eat and wear, but eat and wear so that we may live. Food provides the body with energy; clothing provides warmth and

protection. A materialistic person may deck themselves out in the most ornate jewelry and dress possible, but it's all quite empty apart from a higher reason for living.

See the Ravens!

"Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom or barn; and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than birds!" (Luke 12:24). Jesus contrasts the ravens with the man of his previous parable who busied himself building more and larger barns. The rich man was so materialistic that he only thought of himself in those terms. He did not think of himself as man the creature, nor as man the worshiper, nor as man the offspring of God.

As human beings, we bear the Creator's image. The blood of the Redeemer has been shed for us. If God cares for the physical needs of the ravens, certainly He cares for all of our needs.

Of course it is not wrong to build barns and storehouses. It is not wrong to sow and reap. In fact, those are good things. That's not the point. The point is that we need to recognize our role in God's creation, and have faith in His care.

See the Lilies!

"Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin... if God so arrays the grass of the field... how much more will He clothe you, O men of little faith!" (Luke 12:27-28). God's natural processes provide beauty in the appearance of the lilies which not even Solomon could match. You can't either. There is a beauty which does not depend upon fancy clothing or gold or silver. It has to do with character. Even as God's natural processes bestow beauty upon the lilies, His spiritual process will bestow beauty upon the faithful. But if all we are concerned about is the outward things, then we will miss that wonderful design which God intends for our lives.

God Knows

"...but your father knows that you need these things." (Luke 12:30). You, as believers in God, do not need to continue to harass your hearts and minds with the anxieties of the world. Those who have, with the Psalmist, learned to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd" will also say, "I shall not want."

God Provides

"But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you." (Luke 12:31). Let the eternal kingdom take first place in your life. Food and clothing are important, but temporary needs. Those which put eternal things first will discover that it does not demand that they do without the things they need to live. Putting the kingdom first does not mean that we have do not have time to think about what we eat or how we dress; only that we arrange our priorities properly. A chief benefit we receive now for doing so is freedom from anxiety.

Wonderful Things for a Little Flock

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Perhaps the flock is little, but the Shepherd is brave, loving and wise. We do not need to feel overwhelmed by the immensity of the world and its problems. We see the Shepherd's rod and staff, and are comforted. And we see Shepherd's happy attitude toward us as He protects, guides and provides; He gladly gives us the kingdom.

A Matter of Heart

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke 12:34). Where is the treasure? Well, it's according to your heart. There's an old saying. "One man's treasure is another man's junk." I'm afraid that all of this world's treasures will prove to be only worthless junk on the Day of the Lord. It will fade, but not so the treasure of the kingdom.

The world has already proven itself unreliable and its promises empty. It has nothing to offer that will mean anything on that day when we stand before our God. What a tragedy to live a life of anxiety, only to end it unprepared for the life to come. It does not have to be that way. Jesus has a better way.

- Jon W. Quinn, via *The Bradley Banner*, 6/1/2013

The Whole Armor of God

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13). Our Father has not left us defenseless when it comes to our battles "against the wiles of the devil" (v. 11). Earlier, Paul mentioned that the brethren should be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His great might" (v. 10).

Let's take note of our armor that God has given us through Christ:

1. Having girded your waist with truth (v. 14). It is truth that can set us free (John 8:32). This gives us power over the enemy of lies, and the devil is that father of such (John 8:44). Without truth we have no defense against anything that is false. Truth is what is required for a soldier of Christ to be victorious.

2. Having put on the breastplate of righteousness (v. 14). It is this quality that the enemy abhors. Righteous actions (word or deed) causes those in opposition to be tormented further (Romans 12:20). Saints will be tempted to engage in carnal warfare (2 Corinthians 10:4), which would mean to take off our breastplate. Make sure it stays on and resist the devil and he will flee (James 4:7).

3. Having feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (v. 15). Any spiritual conflict would bring certain defeat without having a firm stand. Christians have the peace, which brings assurance, through the gospel (Philippians 4:7). Having doubts is to give a foothold to the enemy. Satan's earliest tool used to hurt man was by casting doubt: "You shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:3). The gospel of peace will cast out uncertainty (2 Timothy 1:12).

4. Taking the shield of faith (v. 16). The whole purpose of being a good soldier is to please our God, and without faith it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). The edge that children of God have is their ability to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). This enables them to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:16).

5. Take the helmet of salvation (v. 17). What greater comfort is there than knowing you shall be saved? What soldier would fear a battle when he is assured victory? The salvation of the Lord is there for those who will wear it. This is trusting in God who can deliver us (Matthew 6:13, 2 Peter 2:9). It is useless to fight without seeing the salvation of the Lord.

6. Take the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God (v. 17). Knowing that the only thing we are up against is everything that is not God's word, it is only fitting that the use of God's word would be our needed weapon. Too many soldiers are trying to defend truth without God's word. We must use the word for it has the power (Romans 1:16).

As is often pointed out, notice that the armor does not prepare one who turns his back to the enemy--he would be unprotected. This is why throughout the scriptures we are told to press straight ahead (Philippians 3:14). The narrow road doesn't have room to turn back for a rest. If you do that, you are not on the road.

Finally, our text in Ephesians 6, mentions, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (v. 18). Are you wearing the whole armor of God?

- Chuck Bartlett

Hypocrites?

Of course there are religious hypocrites; this is a fact that cannot be denied. There have always been hypocritical people, and there always will be until the Lord comes again. We work very hard to be paid with money, an authoritatively valuable genuine currency. As long as this standard of genuine currency remains, there will always be people working to produce counterfeit money. This counterfeit money is certainly a testimony to the fact that there is something valuable to copy, something worth an effort to imitate, and that there is the genuine thing of value being circulated. Is it not the same with Christianity? In the Apostle John's day, he warned: "many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1). The strong implication is that there were true prophets, faithful Christians who were sound in faith and doctrine. Many, recognizing the good and true with its priceless value, and yet in unbelief, they will put on the sheep's clothing and appear to be in imitation of Christ. But these evidences of some people remaining in darkness do not at all discredit those who walk in the light, and people who condemn as hypocrites all of those who make the good confession are certainly not justified.

- Gary Smalley

- > "The man who is worse than a quitter is the man who is afraid to begin!"
 - > "Hot tempers lead to cool friends!"
 - > "If you find a path with no obstacles, it probably does not lead anywhere!"
 - > "The man who kneels to God can stand up to anything!"
 - > "The Bible fits man for life and prepares him for death!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"To Canaan's Land I'm On My Way!"* (Text: John 6:40); Sunday evening: *Bimonthly Singing!*