

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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How Important Are You To God?

Jesus said, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26)

Have you ever seen a bird dressed up like a farmer? Have you ever observed, in a pick-up truck, a bird driving, going out to check the fields and put out irrigation lines? Have you ever witnessed a bird going to the bank to apply for a loan, to have funds to put a crop out, or buy equipment?

Sounds funny. But what we never see; what we observe in the "unemployment" of birds in farming, is the very thing Jesus is affirming: "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns."

So, how do the birds survive, would be the question. And Jesus gave the answer: Your Heavenly Father feeds them!! (Granted, they have to work to get the food and eat it, etc. But that isn't the main point here.)

It occurs to me, Jesus did not say, "The Birds Heavenly Father." No — He said, "Your Heavenly Father feeds them." But is this just a lesson in how God takes care of birds??

No — the whole point of this comes with the next statement, which is stated as a rhetorical question: "Are you not of more value than they?" Now — when we read statements like this — we need to include ourselves. There is every reason in the context, to see that Jesus is addressing the value of people; not groups, but individuals!! He goes on to say, two verses later, "Why do you worry?" "Worry" is a function of individuals. This is about the value of individual people, in the sight of God; in the estimation of heaven.

And this is what matters most!! You may think nothing of yourself. You may imagine that others think of you in demeaning ways. People may even tell you or display to you in

some way that they think little of you. You can mark that down as human estimation. Then, get focused on divine estimate. Jesus said you are of high value — crowned with glory and honor, regarded by God as His valuable creature! Read the 8th Psalm.

- Warren Berkley

He Grew Up

Our world is in the hurry and bustle of the final days and hours before Christmas. Presents are being bought and wrapped, baking is being done, traveling is going on, and all sorts of other late-minute things are being completed so the holiday can be enjoyed by as many as possible.

In the midst of all that preparation, many are also focusing on the birth of Jesus Christ. Certainly, we do not know the date on the calendar on which Jesus was born, but so many in our world are thinking about that event this time of year that it is to our advantage to speak even more openly and boldly about our faith. There is, in some ways, a clearer pathway to speak to people about Jesus when they are thinking about His birth during this time.

What is difficult to get across to people, though, is that the baby in the manger grew up. Then, when that same baby was a man, He demanded so much of people and said things that are not always popular in our world. He told us that we have to guard our heart, or we are guilty of the most heinous of sins (see Matthew 5:23; 5:28; 5:44). He told us that families would be torn apart for following Him (Matthew 10:34-37). He made it clear that there is only one way to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14), and that only following Him would be that way (John 14:6).

Ultimately, Jesus gave His life on the cross, but also demanded that we be willing to take up a cross each day, that we live in order to follow Him (Luke 9:23). Part of the life and teachings of Jesus is simply not what people want to hear, but we dare not shy away from the entirety of Who Jesus was (and is), and what He demands of people if they would be counted faithful and live eternally with Him in heaven.

While so many are thinking about the baby Jesus in the manger, may we have the boldness to take this opportunity to boldly, yet lovingly, remind people that He grew up and that He is to be the Lord of all our lives. But we must also take every opportunity to show and remind people that following Him as Lord is not drudgery, but joy.

- Adam Faughn

The Value of Time

Every turn of a calendar-page and every tick of a clock tells us that what has passed we will never undo, and we are responsible for what we have now. I have heard time described as “a section cut from the great circle of eternity.” We should view time as a priceless gift from God. As we soon go into the New Year of 2021, we should remind ourselves of time’s value. Once past, it can never be retrieved. It is ours now, but whether it will be ours one moment from now is in God’s hands. We have no binding claim upon time.

The apostle Paul spoke of the value of time when he spoke of “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). Time is not just the accumulation of seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years, but everything that time offers to us, including opportunities and privileges, and Paul, by inspiration, urges us to redeem such. Paul uses the language of the market-place. In the days, and even weeks approaching the end of the year, shoppers have been fervently in search of bargains, taking advantage of sales in stores and online, searching for best-buys. Should we be any less fervent in the pursuit of spiritual blessings that God has graciously made available to us?

One opportunity that is overlooked by too many is the most valuable of all—the opportunity time offers us for salvation. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 6:2, reminds us, “Now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.” Here is truly the “best buy” of all—salvation, a gift already paid for with the blood of Christ, as Peter reminds Christians of the fact that we are redeemed (purchased) “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The opportunity of salvation is ours as God’s gift to man, but the acceptance of this gift rests with us. As Paul said, “Now is the accepted time...day of salvation,” but multitudes pass by this priceless gift as they seek the pleasures and treasures that will one day be no more. May all of us be reminded, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:16-17). As we conclude the present year, and enter into the New Year, may we accept the gift that abides forever, “redeeming the time.”

- Ronald Bartanen [slightly edited]

WHAT I SEE IN THE CHILDREN AROUND ME

As I observe the unstoppable growth of our children my heart pours out thanksgivings to my heavenly Father! I am so very thankful that among my closest associates I see GOOD things:

I see parents that love their children. I think love is the key to navigate the channels of change that their children's lives present. They are the recipients of such gentle tenderness that is praised in the scriptures (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8). This is the atmosphere in which our children do not "lose heart" (Colossians 3:21), and I love seeing it in fathers and mothers around me.

I see parents that teach their children. In the children around me I see the results of dedicated diligence (Deuteronomy 6:7) in the work of teaching one's children the law of God's mouth, which is better than "thousands of gold and silver pieces" (Psalm 119:72). I love seeing parents that behave as ones whom the Lord expects to teach their children without laying the responsibility onto others.

I see parents that discipline their children. I see undaunted commitment in the training principles of parents in a world of shameful lawlessness. I see parents who have cultivated sensitivity and have used effective measures to guide their children in respect for authority and fairness in justice and mercy, and this consistently (cf. Proverbs 13:24; 19:18). Thank you parents for showing love, not anger and fairness, not double standards in the training of your children. The lives of your children are shaped by your being loving disciplinarians.

I see parents that show their children the way to God. Children learn by what they are taught, but it sticks with them when they learn by what they see. Children imitate parents in many ways, and I am seeing a desire to live for God in the children around me. When mothers and fathers serve God with a pure heart they can expect that their children will do the same.

Not in every single case, but very often, what is seen in children is traceable to the parents. What I see in the children that occupy the places I frequent is delightful. Truly, the Lord's way is sweeter than the honeycomb! Join me in thanking God for the blessings of godly parents and their dedicated children!

- Gary Smalley

- * "Our love for God must be expressed in loving our brethren!"
 - * "Maybe you can't understand all you read in the Bible, but you can obey all you do understand!"
 - * "Religion indicates man searching for God - Christianity shows us God in search of man!"
 - * "Real prayer always does one of two things: it either frees us from the trouble we fear, or else it gives us the strength and courage to meet the trouble when it comes!"
 - * "Many folks want to serve God, but only as advisors!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)