

Renewed Vision

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[0:00] Go to Proverbs, if you've got your Bible there. Proverbs 29, verse 18. We're looking at an eternal perspective, aiming for an eternal purpose, an eternal perspective.

! It's like changing your spectacles, if you like. Where there is no vision, the people perish. We're living in a world that's perishing, aren't we? People don't know Christ, they've got that lack of vision, they've never seen Jesus and his saving.

There's a whole lost, dying world out there, separated from God by sin. And we are made to live for the eternal. That's really our purpose.

But really, even as God's children, we don't always let the eternal stay in focus. We get locked into the temporal things too much. There was a man in Sydney called Arthur Stace, and for 37 years, over half a million times, he wrote the words, Eternity, on the pavement of Sydney.

And really, it was one sermon in a word. Eternity. Eternity. Stace got saved when he heard a preacher, John Ridley, shout out, I wish I could shout eternity throughout all the streets of Sydney.

[1:10] And so Stace was moved when he heard this to do just that. Took a piece of chalk and he bent down and he wrote Eternity on the footpath. And friends, eternity is what really we're living for, isn't it?

We live forever. With our end. There's another world. There's another country, God's country. And it's really something for us as believers to have that eternal perspective in everything we do.

So what is eternity like? Our life is comprised of three major events. Our birth, determining our future, and our death. At our birth, our life first intersects the timeline of history and we become part of it.

Our future, the best decision we can make is to trust Christ, to spend eternity with him. And then our death. One day our earthly body will die.

But our days on earth will determine where we spend eternity. Have we received the gift? The average person has perhaps about 70 years of life.

[2:14] Now some of you are living a bit beyond. You're on borrowed time. Now 70 years is a very short time, isn't it? When you think about it, what portion of my life do I still have to live? So I hope that eternity will be indelibly printed on our minds.

There's three things you could say that will last forever. Number one, God. God will last forever. For it says of him, of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, the heavens are the work of thy hands.

They shall perish, but thou shalt endure. Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment. As a vesture shall thou change them, they shall be changed.

But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. It says even the world is going to be like a garment getting old. But God is forever. God is eternal.

Another thing that is forever is the word of God. It says heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away. We've got a book we've got absolute confidence in. That every word of it is true.

[3:14] It is forever. It's forever. It shall not pass away. And a third thing that shall last forever. We've got God shall last forever. His word shall last forever. Another thing that shall last forever is people.

People. It says that the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. People are important.

They shall live forever. Even the people we don't always get along with, they're going to live forever. So we should take note of that. Be mindful of that. That people are going to live forever.

I like to kind of joke, I don't know which one of you might be my neighbour in heaven. I better be nice to you here on earth because you might be my next door neighbour in heaven for all eternity. You know, I'm sure you'll be more spiritual and more godly then.

[4:14] But so will I, I trust. But you know, we think, people are forever. That's a thought, isn't it? We should think about that. Because heaven is forever. It says that it's an everlasting kingdom.

We know that our Lord is forever. And we will be forever together, we that know him, in that forever home. His eternal home. So everything else that we have in this world is really of not the same quality.

It's not of eternal or everlasting value. So we've got a significant role in the now for eternity. Every one of us is important. And we can know we have eternal life now.

People struggle with this. They think, I'm not saved yet. How can I be saved? The Bible says you can know that you're saved. This is the record. God has given to us eternal life. You can have it in the present tense.

And it goes on to say, You that believe in the name of the Son of God, you can know that you have. You have. Have. I've got it. I've grabbed a hold of it. I have it. It's in my possession.

[5:17] I have eternal life. You can know that today. You might say, Preacher, look, I'm religious. I go to church. I think I'm a Christian. I hope I'm a Christian. I hope I'm going to heaven.

I think I'm going to heaven. Friends, you can know. Know, know, know that you know that you know. That you have. Yes, I have it. Eternal life.

How? You that believe. Believe. Faith. Believe on the name of Jesus. Believe. Jesus is your saviour. Yes, I believe.

Well, yes, you've got it. Eternal life. That's it. It's no more complicated than that. An old writer said this. For a small reward, a man will hurry away on a long journey.

While for eternal life, many will hardly take a single step. Some miss that all-important step. Trust Christ. That's the step. Take that step.

[6:11] By faith. To step. By faith. And say, Yes, I trust. How is your perspective? What kind of spectacles are you wearing? We can all get caught up in the humdrum.

And even though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day. Even all this light affliction is but for a moment, it works for us an eternal, an eternal weight of glory.

Friends, we look not at the things which are seen. We don't fix our eyes on that. All the, you know, we can all get caught up in making a living, with paying a mortgage, with helping our, you know, practical circumstances of life.

Yes, that's needful, but we don't focus on that. We focus on that which is eternal. So let's not trifle with forever things. Let me move on quickly.

I know I'm laboring a bit. Well, I've got probably three sermons this morning. But just some quick thoughts about the vision for the future. We're at the new year. What's our vision?

[7:12] Looking forward. God has been faithful. What are we believing God for? What are you believing God for? I'd like us to believe God as a church for newborn Christians. That someone's going to get saved.

They're going to get sanctified. They're going to get on board. They're going to become a disciple of Christ. What's our vision? What's our vision for this church? Where do we see us going forward?

Every one of us. Really, it's a call to action, I pray this morning. I pray it won't fall on deaf ears. I think that our vision is three things. In a way, it incorporates faith, hope and love.

That we'll have faith as a vibrant, growing church. A God-dependent church. We'll have hope.

Looking for that blessed hope. We'll have that mindset. We're living in the light of his coming again.

We've got hope and we've got love. In our relationships with one another and with him. What's our purpose? Our Lord has vision. He saw the multitude, it says, in Matthew 9.

[8:12] They were fainting. They were scattered abroad. He had compassion. He was moved with compassion. Friends, we're living in the midst of a harvest field. We're slap bang in the middle right here, right here,

right now, in the middle of a huge harvest field.

And there's a plentiful harvest right around us. And the Lord says, pray the Lord of the harvest that he's going to send forth labourers. It says, the Lord saw the need.

He saw the people. He saw and he had compassion. Just quickly, three things. Our vision is about meeting needs.

There's people. They're like sheep without a shepherd. The people are shepherdless. They're struggling. They're fainting. Troubled. It's a big harvest field, but there's few workers.

Our vision is to meet the needs, to see with compassion and to be part of meeting needs. There's a crying need to be met. The most biggest need, of course, is salvation.

[9:14] That's why we care about soul winning. That's why we take pains to step out of our comfort zone and to reach out. There's walking wounded all around us.

Elizabeth is a great place to find needs. There's needs everywhere, isn't there? There's needs on every street. And we can be part of meeting those needs. Friends, there's much more we could say. Are we part of the problem or part of the solution? Are we meeting needs? Are we reaching out to the needy? Really, everyone's needy. And the biggest need is Christ.

We need to lift up our eyes to be a church committed to meeting needs. So number one, meet the needs. Have compassion as you look and you see the shepherdless ones.

Those without the shepherd, they're lost. They need to be saved. Meet needs. Secondly, get a sense of mission. We're committed to mission. Our church is a mission. Mission. This is a mission organisation.

[10:14] This is a missionary training sending centre. This is a missionary outpost in a heathen world. Mission. We are missionaries. You are a missionary.

You are a missionary. If you are a believer today. We need to mobilise to the harvest of souls all around us and have that sense of mission to communicate the gospel.

And you are the one who will communicate it. You are a missionary today. And the mission is now. The mission is right now. It's not down the track.

As our Lord challenged the disciples in John 4. The mission is now, not down the track. He says, say not ye. There are four months. There's time.

You know, in X amount of time, in four months I'll go to the harvest. No, it's now, he says. He says, behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes. He says, look now. Look on the fields. They are white.

[11:12] They're ready. They're ripe. Already, he says. Ready now. So the mission is you and the mission is now. And thirdly, in the sense of renewed vision, it's about ministry.

And you are a minister. We're all ministers. We're all in the ministry. Now some people have got the idea, oh, he's in the ministry because he's got a dog collar on and he's had training and he's the one that does the preaching.

No, every one of us are ministers. You are a minister. It means servant. Get that. It means servant. How do you spell ministry? You spell it W-O-R-K.

It's work. It's work. Are we doing the work of the ministry? And in Ephesians 4, we see God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. Why? For the perfecting, the maturing, the completing, the developing of the saints, the people of God, the holy ones, which is you.

For the work of the ministry. That's for all of us. The work of the ministry is for all of us. So are we doing it? Some misread that to only apply to the minister.

[12:21] But we're all in the work, the work of the ministry. And it tells us that every part has a part to play. It says that there's an effectual working in the measure of every part that brings an increase to the body.

Do we have an effectual working? Are you effectual? Are you effective? Maybe there's a problem. Work on that. That there'll be a proper working of every, each and every individual part.

Friends, we can be strong together. That's the church. So ministry, also, I love this one. It means that we're co-laborous with God. We work together and we work together with God.

God, that's ministry. And so I could paraphrase a famous quote and say this. Ask not, what can this church do for me? But what can I do for the Lord in this church?

It's a good quote, isn't it? Of course, we know it's talking about a country, the real quote. But ask not what this church can do for me. You know, I come to church because I want this church to help me. [13:28] And I want to be feeling good and get a warm and fuzzy. And I want people to look after and pander me. What can this church do for me, me, me? Or what can I do for the Lord in this church?

How can I be an effectual working in every part? How can I be a co-worker with God? It's an every member involvement. That's the renewed vision I put to you.

And also look among ourselves about the potential that is right here. I don't have the idea that we've got to, as much as we have done, you know, get someone from America.

You know, bring the cavalry to come and help us. You know, we're always, you know, if the people watching from America, you know, come over and help us. We're happy to have any help we can.

But we're not looking for people from other places to help us.

It's actually from within. It's from within that God can raise up people from within, from within our own number. There was a problem. You know, they said it is not reason.

[14:33] It says there's a problem here. The disciples were serving, doing things that others could have done. And the word of God was being neglected. And so they said, let's look.

Look ye out among you. So, look out from among you. Who is it among us that can actually rise up and play a stronger part?

How can we mobilise the latent potential, the hidden potential that's among us? It's among you who we may appoint. So, it's an interesting thought, isn't it?

Look out from among us. Amongst this number of people here, how many could actually do something? Something more, something extra. Something for the glory of God.

And it's a renewed vision, isn't it? It's ministry. That God has got a purpose for every life. And the question is not, have I got a ministry? But what is my ministry or gift?

[15:36] Don't say, oh, have I got a ministry? And maybe I'll get one in a few years' time when I'm more trained. But no, what is my ministry? What is God calling me?

What is God putting on my heart to do? What has God gifted me to do? It could be simple things, practical things. Opportunity to help out. Like I say, opportunity to help out in the IT booth in practical ways.

Serving. Helping. Praying. Prayer is a ministry. And friends, ministry is not just for Sundays too. Don't think, oh, I've got to come to the building to minister.

No, it's 24 by 7. So I pray in 2022 that we'll take those opportunities. We're going to face some challenges, but there's blessings.

Probably in that order. We need to build our strength for the battles. Because we're going to have to pick some battles. And as a church, we can only be strong as we encourage one another.

[16:41] It's been said, every congregation has a large reservoir of power, which is yet to tear. Now, whatever it is doing, it can do more. Most of the time, it can do much, much more.

Now, that's true of many churches. It's true of this church. There's more we could do if people started to realise, God's given me something I can do. It's the life of Christ in you.

And so, it's about what would Jesus do as well. This should be our driving passion. What would Jesus do? What would our Lord Jesus do? I like how someone has said, someone said to me a while back, in how they tried to live right and how they tried to please God, this person said, I pretend that I am Jesus.

That's a good philosophy to have, isn't it? I pretend that I am Jesus. What would Jesus do? If he was standing in my shoes, and he is, what would Jesus do? Amen. Be Christ to your world.

It doesn't mean, I'm not saying you're going to be the second coming of Christ, but there's a sense where we are Christ ones, aren't we? We're Christ filled. Christ fills your shoes.

[17:50] He fills your human vessel. And so, a renewed vision, a renewed vision. Friends, just as we close, we've got a work to do.

It's the work of the ministry. And every one of you are part of that. We've got a great commandment to love one another. We've got a great commission to show his love, to take his gospel, to share the word of God, to meet the needs.

The greatest need anyone has is the need of the saviour. So what's my path? What's my response? To meet the need, to fulfil the mission, to take the place of ministry.

I trust prayerfully you'll find that. Let us pray. Our Lord God, we thank you for everyone that's here today, those that are watching. Lord, for your grace, your continued grace, your mercy for 2021 and for 2022 ahead.

Lord, we pray your extended mercy. So Lord, help us to be those ones who'll meet the need. We'll see the need. It's all around us. Lord, we'll rise up as missionaries. Each one will find that mission and fulfil it.

[18:57] And we'll find that ministry and serve. Serve well. Serve willingly. Lord, help us to be such a people. Give us, Lord, that grace with one another.

Help us to be forbearing. Help us, Lord, to be enduring. Help us to be gracious. Lord, we thank you for every good gift is from above.

It's from you. Lord, we pray for any present or watching that have yet to trust you, have yet to receive that awesome, precious, everlasting gift of eternal life, that they'll say, Yes, Lord, I believe. You died on the cross for my sin. You rose again. You're my saviour. By faith, I trust you now. And I receive that gift of everlasting life. And I know that I have eternal life because I have believed.

Lord, we thank you for each one. Go with us now, our families, Lord, until we meet again. All to your praise, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Be encouraged in your faith in these days ahead.

[19:59] Amen. Amen.