

Making your Mark

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[0:00] Let's talk about Mark tonight. Making your mark. Making your mark. What will we leave behind? Making your mark. 1 Timothy 6, verses 6 and 7. 1 Timothy 6, verses 6 and 7. If we can stand, if we're able. Just stretch your legs one more time before I keep you for an hour or two.

1 Timothy 6, but godliness with contentment is great gain for we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Lord, we thank you for your word and bless it to our hearts now we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Please be seated.

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[1:51] 1 Timothy 7 and 7. 1 Timothy 7 and 7. 1 Timothy 7 and 7. 1 Timothy 7 and 7. James Brown and Saddam Hussein had their choices in their destiny.

Today, they have all three stood in front of the God of this universe with those choices unveiled and judged. Now, I'm not personally acquainted, and so I'm going by someone's reckoning.

This is what someone has painted of this man, but I have read some about his life, and I heard that he had regular prayer times in the White House.

Now, we're not certain of his standing, but others have reckoned that he was a firm Christian man. President Gerald Ford, he was a man who professed faith in God, and his service to his country was eulogised by many speakers during the solemn and dignified ceremonies which marked his passing.

A man of character and integrity, not perfect, but made righteous by faith in Christ. And it was in this righteousness that he lived out his life as a servant to his fellow men and his country.

[3:13] Great people and dignitaries attended his funeral, and all were coming to pay respect and honour to this man most deserving. That was number one.

Number two, James Brown. James Brown was also eulogised in a funeral ceremony befitting his life choices. There was blaring rock music, gyrating bodies, costumes, and great sensual displays of revelry to portray the contribution of this man that he had given through his life to his fellow men. He lived a life of drugs, alcohol, immorality, and rock music. He was heralded the father of rap music, and the inspiration of Michael Jackson's supposed greatness.

And James Brown's funeral was, all of its theatrics, was befitting the excess of waste that his life betrayed.

James Brown. Saddam Hussein, he had a gruesome hanging at his ending, and his death was as gory as his life.

[4:27] A brutal murderer and a dictator executed and secreted away in the middle of the night to an unmarked grave. Thousands of Iraqis celebrated his death, for through his life he had brought untold misery and death to many in his nation and beyond.

A man so wicked that it seemed the world breathed a collective sigh of relief at the pronouncement of his death. Three men, three men, who left their mark on the entire world and passed away just at the same time.

Three famous men. And all three have now stood before the Creator to answer for their choices that they made in their lives, as you and I will do someday.

There is only one choice, and Gerald Ford's life is an example of the nobility of choosing to walk in harmony with the Creator through knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as his Redeemer.

James Brown chose to walk in the flesh. His life work was glorifying the flesh, and his death magnified the flesh. Saddam Hussein, he chose evil.

[5:47] He was a vain, destructive dictator. His life glorified evil, and his death was gruesome. This all played out in one day. God painted a great picture for mankind to see, and I pray people got his message.

What mark will you leave behind? Will it be the children and family you leave, the memories, the works, the failures?

What is your life? James 4, 13, it says, Go to now, ye that say, today or tomorrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain.

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and that vanisheth away.

For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. You know, it's a good practice to say, God willing, I intend to do this, rather than to brashly say, I'm going to do this or that.

[7:00] Because you know not, you know, as I refer to this morning, there's a scripture that says, boast not of tomorrow. Don't boast of tomorrow. We've only got today.

What is your life? Are you making it count? You know, life, James says, it is even a vapour. It's like that fog we get sometimes, isn't it? It just blows in and blows out.

And just that, that mist, that vapour, that passing substance that just evaporates and dispels and is no more.

Life is just a vapour, like a vapour. And it vanishes away. We know that. Life is so fragile. I know I was tuning into the internet and there was a story of a couple of girls that they live streamed.

They're driving along and the live stream picked up their tragic death. As they were, one of them was driving along with, sort of larking around with the young lady next to her and bang, a street pole.

[8:18] And their life was over in a flash. And, you know, what a picture that is. How quickly life can be taken from us. We don't know. There's no guarantee of tomorrow.

What is your life? It is as a vapour. Are you making it count? This is a question for all of us. What mark will you leave behind? Will you leave the world a better place because you have been here? What kind of portrait are you painting? What kind of life story are you writing? You will leave your mark. Every one of us will. And, you know, as a preacher, I often get the, at times, sad, but at times, joyful blessing of presiding at someone's funeral.

And, it captures your emotion. It tells it. It's a telling story of a person's life.

And how do you capture that in just a few moments of time? How do you write that? How do you eulogise someone in just a few short words at a funeral? How do you capture a person's life?

[9:28] And what is there to say? At times, it's hard to say much.

Someone's written a poem. You might have heard this before. It's called The Dash.

Who's ever heard this? The Dash. I'll read it to you. It goes like this. I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend.

He referred to the dates on a tombstone from the beginning to the end. He noted that first came her date of her birth and spoke the following date with tears.

But, he said, what mattered most of all was the dash between those years. For that dash represents all the time that she spent alive on earth.

And now, only those who love her know what that little line is worth. For it matters not how much we own, the cars, the house, the cash.

[10:29] What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash. So, think about this long and hard. Are there things you'd like to change?

You never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged. If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real and always try to understand the way other people feel and be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and love the people in our lives like we've never

loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile, remembering that this special little dash might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy is being read with your life's actions to rehash, would you be proud of the things they say about how you spend your dash?

The date of your birth, the date of your death, your dash. The dash matters, doesn't it? How we spend our dash. Are we making our mark? An impression on people's lives, on the people who know you, the people you meet.

[11:47] You are building something every day. What will people say about you when they stand around your grave? A great mum, a great dad, a kind person, a thief, a cheat, a liar, a drunkard, a saint, a fool.

You are writing your own epitaph. You are making your imprint on planet Earth. You're making an impression. Make it a good one. What matters most is the reckoning up of it.

All at the last day. Will he say, come into my rest? Or, I never knew you. Depart from me. Will he say, well done?

Or will he say, not so well done? What will you have to show for your life? On your tombstone, what will the dash represent? Just a dash between two days?

The measure of a man, of a woman. Not how did he die, but how did he live? Not what did he gain, but what did he give? These are the merits to measure the worth of a man as a man regardless of birth.

[12:56] Not what was his station, but had he a heart? And how did he play his God-given part? Was he ever ready with a word of good cheer, to bring back a smile, to banish a tear?

Not what was his shrine, nor what was his creed, but had he befriended those really in need? Not what did the piece in the newspaper say, but how many were sorry when he passed away?

These are the units to measure the worth of a man as a man regardless of birth. We're all making our mark. We're all living our dash.

What will we leave behind? There's a preacher who talked about David, some of this is borrowed from him. David, one example of a man living his life, an example of a man making a mark.

When David was anointed king of Israel, Saul was still on the throne. David could have seized the power but was content instead to wait for God's timing.

[14:00] Even when Saul led an army to attack David, trying to kill him, David showed grace and love to Saul. One night when David was able to sneak up on Saul, his men wanted David to do Saul in finally.

But David answered, far be it from me to touch the Lord's anointed. David called Saul the Lord's anointed, even though most of what he had done as king, what Saul had done as king showed otherwise.

And so that night David only cut off a piece of Saul's robe and gave it to him to show him mercy. He could have taken his life but he just took a piece of his garment.

When David was finally king after Saul's death, David did his best to look after Saul's family so that they would not be harmed in the transfer of power. He even looked after the man who was against him, his family.

And David asked, is there anyone left in the household of Saul to whom I can show kindness? And his advisors told him of a man named Mephibosheth, one of Saul's grandsons, who had a physical disability.

[15:17] David brought him into his own home. He gave the land that would have been his right as the grandson of Saul and assigned him people to work the land for him.

He looked after Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson. David inspired the whole nation of Israel to see what it meant to live in relationship with God, to treat people fairly.

Can you imagine the way a whole nation would feel to have a leader like that? who showed that power does not have to corrupt, and that doing the right thing has its own reward.

These actions showed the mark that David left, that David had a heart that was recognised when he was just a boy, where God said through Samuel, I'll put a man after mine own heart on the throne of Israel.

And it seemed that God had done just that. Well, so it seemed until one dark day, David, the passionate singer, songwriter, met his downfall.

[16:25] One evening David was up on the roof of the palace, feeling good about all the great things that he had done for the people of Israel, but he looks and doesn't avoid sin.

We know that David fell. He crashed into sin. And then, even worse, he sends Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to the front lines, so he is deliberately killed in battle.

Now David is not only guilty of adultery, but now he is a murderer too. But God's grace continues. Thank God for that. Amen. Aren't you glad that God's grace continues? That he's the God of the second chance, and the third chance, and the fourth chance. He's the God.

He shows grace to those least deserving of grace. The prophet Nathan enters the scene and with grace he tells David a story.

[17:28] A story about a rich man and a poor man who has only one small sheep. And the rich man steals the poor man's sheep and leaves the poor man with nothing. David is angered.

The rich man should be put to death. David proclaims. David, Nathan says, the rich man is you. And David responds with, I have sinned against the Lord. Suddenly David is back on the track of faith and he does what he can to fix the mess that he has made.

And so he composes a song. Psalm 51. Psalm 51. It speaks to us of the cry of David's heart as he comes to that place of repentance.

Psalm 51. And we do well to read this whole psalm to capture the sense of what David expressed in this psalm.

[18:34] And verse 10 we read, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. David fell, but God restored David.

God restored David. And David goes on to become an even better king, because people who have received forgiveness and mercy and grace tend to give it to others.

Now he who has sinned much is forgiven much. And there's great grace, God has given us great grace, and grace that is undeserved, it's never deserved.

It cannot be earned or deserved. We can't work for it, we can't gain any credit for it. It's grace. It's given by the one who forgives.

[19:46] And the good news for us is even if we've fallen as David had, as David struggled with his own character and his own faulty state, we can repent like David, and we can know the grace that is there for us.

His grace is there for us. It's God's promise. David made his mark. It wasn't always a good mark that he left on this world. But in the end, God got hold of David's life again, and David was able to be used of God, greatly used of God.

And David made his mark. You're going to leave something behind. The people your lives have touched. Make your mark, make your life count in how you treat others and in your relationship with the Lord.

We're all making our mark, aren't we? As we started with, we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

We can carry nothing out, but we can leave something behind, the mark of our lives. God, I urge you tonight to consider thy ways, the Bible says.

[21:09] And it talks about apply your heart to wisdom, to number your days, to apply your heart to wisdom. It tells us that life is available, and we've got no guarantees of how much time we have.

Let's make every day count. let's think, perhaps I'll just close with some prayerful considerations just together now. Perhaps there's opportunity tonight where we might consider the mark that we're leaving behind, the mark we're making on others' lives, the mark of our testimony where we failed, we can seek after God, get it straightened out with him and with others.

let's not leave it, but get it right, and let's trust God's grace and ever more rely upon it as David came to, that we come to know that grace, and to know that grace holds us and keeps us and sustains us and strengthens us.

Lord, we pray tonight, if there's any that have yet to trust you entirely, that they will do so tonight, and that each one will be renewed in their faith and refreshed in their commitment, Lord.

Help us to consider our lives and make our lives count, to leave a mark, to leave a dash that will have meant something, but most of all, that will live lives that glorify you, Lord, so that others will see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

[22:53] Lord, that all the glory will be yours. We can't really claim credit for even our good works because it's all from your hand. It's all by your enabling.

It's all by your power. Lord, we pray for every Christian here tonight that we might know that strength that comes from you, that when we fail we can find your forgiveness, Lord.

We can find peace. And as it's been prayed tonight about trials, we know that we're never alone, but you're always with us. Help us, Lord, to realise that.

Help us, Lord, not to despair, but to always find that comfort, that the comforter abides, that you live with us, you remain with us, and every day you're closer and closer.

Lord, we pray for every Christian to be strengthened for these lives ahead. Help us to be witnesses that will live lives, that will be messengers of the good news to others around about us.

[24:01] We praise you, Lord, for all your goodness and care and all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen.