

What Are You Living For?

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[0 : 00] It's good to see all of you this morning. And if you were paying attention to the songs that we were singing, you would recognize! that they had to do with what Christ accomplished for us on the cross. His death, his resurrection, the redemption, reconciliation, ransom, all those big words that essentially allude to the fact of forgiveness and purchasing us to God, making us belong to him, having us be part of his family. The question that we're going to come to in our passage this morning in Luke chapter 20 is really a response to what Christ has done, that price that he paid for us. And the question kind of comes down to this, what did Christ's death and resurrection accomplish for you? What did it purchase for you? What did it do for you? And of course, the answer to that question is, for those who believe in Christ and ask forgiveness for their sins, it means that we have to look forward to life in heaven. We have forgiveness of sins and cleansing that we can look forward to, but it's done so much more than that. That we are bought with a price. And so we are called to live in consistency with that truth. What does it look like to be bought with a price? The precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. What does that point to? What does that mean day by day for us?

If you've not read this book, it's a book called God is the Gospel. I know it's kind of small for those of you in the back. God is the Gospel by John Piper. I would commend it to you. It's a great book because it's small. I like that. So you can kind of get through it and kind of feel like you've accomplished something. But also because of the truths, the truths that are there and helping to point us to the fullness of the Gospel and what it means. In this book, John Piper asks this question that maybe you've heard before, but I think it helps set the tone for our passage today in Luke chapter 20. He says this, The critical question for our generation and for every generation is this. If you could have heaven with no sickness and with all the friends you ever had on earth and all the food you ever liked and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven if Christ were not there? Now, my guess is that the immediate kind of response to that question is, well, that doesn't sound so bad. I kind of like that idea of heaven. That's kind of the picture I've painted in my mind of what heaven would be like. I mean, that sounds pretty amazing. I want that kind of heaven. But of course we know the right answer. We know we can't say that that would be good.

We can't say that that would be the heaven that we could be settled with because we understand that Jesus is our Savior, that we owe our life to Him, that He's forgiven us, that He's taken the price, the penalty for sin that we deserve, that of course that He's our Savior. He's drawn us into His family. And so we couldn't possibly have that kind of heaven. We know that intellectually. But perhaps the reason why we struggle to answer that question, probably consistently and with some integrity, is because that's how we live from day to day. We live our life day by day as if Jesus doesn't matter.

So living in eternity that's free of all the things that kind of make us sad and bitter and frustrated, that kind of heaven doesn't sound so bad because that's just a better thing of what we're trying to accomplish here on this earth. And that's really the essence of our passage today. There are two questions that are posed to Jesus here in this final week, a couple of days leading up to the cross.

And those two questions in essence have this in mind, what are you living for? And that's the question that you have there in your notes. What are you living for? And the answer to that question of course is that the question of belonging. Do you live for the things that you desire?

[5 : 13] You live for the things that you value. And to put it in a in a piper-esque kind of way, you live for the things you treasure. The objectives of your life are oriented towards the things you really want, the things you really love, the things that really make you feel happy. And so the direction of your life really is a window. It's a picture. It helps to know the real you and not just for the people around you. It helps the you to know yourself in what really drives you and motivates you and steers you in life.

What do you want more than anything? Well, your life is a picture of what you treasure. Your life is a window to this belonging. What are you living for? And that's what Jesus will come to. Really, the essence of the answers to these questions that are being posed to him have at the heart of it, the belonging of God, that we belong to God. And so I've got just two points this morning. It should be very simple.

The first point is is that your present life belongs to God. Your present life belongs to God. That's verses 19 to 26. And then we're going to see, well, your future life also belongs to God. That's that that's verses 27 to verse 44. And and and that's the simple structure of our message this morning and and the answers to these two questions. Your present life belongs to God. I trust you're with me there in Luke chapter 20. If you're using the pew Bible, I believe it's on page 879.

We're going to be picking this up at verse 19. Here's what it says. The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people. So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be sincere that they might catch him in something he said so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. So they asked him, teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar or not? So these chief priests and and scribes are coming and we're verse 19 kind of forms a transition for us between the the parable that was shared by Christ uh last week that we saw in the preceding verses and and now what we're going to find as the response question in trying to trap

Jesus here by these scribes and Pharisees here in verses 19 to 26. As we saw last week, Jesus had kind of given a parable a parable about some some tenants that had been entrusted to a vineyard by an owner of of this of this vineyard and some time had gone by and the owner sent some servants. He sent at least three servants. They beat those servants. They turned them away and so the owner thought, wait, I'm going to send my son. They're going to respect my son. So so so the owner sends his son and what they do to the son? They killed him and they turned him out of the vineyard. And Jesus responds.

[8 : 47] He looks straight in the faces of these scribes and Pharisees, these scribes and chief priests who who've come to ask this question and he says to them directly, the stone that the builders have rejected has become the cornerstone. Meaning don't reject the stone because your response to the stone will indicate the response of your heart and and the future judgment that's coming. You're either going to stumble on that stone and you're going to break to pieces through your rejection or maybe even ignorantly or passively. You're going to go along the way but but in your heart that rejection is going to lead to the stone falling on you and and dashing you, crushing you to bits.

Don't reject the stone. And here are these Pharisees or these scribes and chief priests. They know that Jesus is talking about them and and they are they are ticked off. They are angry.

And they've been wanting to arrest Jesus this whole time but but they've been unable to do this and we find the reason kind of embedded again in this in this verse in verse 19. They they're unable to arrest Jesus because they feared the people. They feared the people. So they devised this plan. Their plan is kind of fairly simple but it's covert. It's covert plan. And the the language that Luke uses here is descriptive. You can see several different things that they do in this plan to try to trap Jesus. And I want you to recognize that as you're working through a passage on your own, any time the writer of scripture slows down, provides more details, then you need to sit up and listen. Pay attention. So notice what how Luke describes the response of these leaders. It says they watched him.

They sent spies. They pretended. They want to catch him. They want to deliver him, right? All of these things, these action words that describe their activity, this covert operation so they can put Jesus down. But but here's the here's the really uh funny thing to me at least that I that I recognize in this in this passage is the the whole point of their plan is now to defer to Roman authority. Okay? So so the religious leaders there in Jerusalem who were given jurisdiction over the matters of Jewish law and process, they have been immobilized. They have been paralyzed by the people. And so the only way now to get Jesus, they can't go do it because of the people. So now they have to defer to other authorities.

They need the Roman authorities to do their dirty work for them. They need the the Roman authorities that who they by the way they hated, they resented, they needed them to do the cleanup job in their plates.

[12:13] And because of their self-serving nature, they defer and they're okay with deferring in this case to Roman authority.

So so even in this, Jesus is exposing their true heart, their true nature. They're not men of conviction. They're men of convenience. They're men of compromise. And and and they're not men of courage. They're men of cowardice.

Because they're not willing to act on the things that they believe. They are willing to defer to others because of their compromising heart. We'll see this reveals the hypocrisy that's taking place deep down inside. Here by the way, they're appealing to the very Roman authorities that they feel in this question are going to help to bring Jesus down.

Because in their minds with this question, Jesus is either going to reinforce that God has given promises to Israel and that the nation belongs to God. Or Jesus is going to say, well, Roman authorities are fine.

In their mind, that's the struggle. And yet they're asking this question and essentially deferring to Roman authorities, which shows the hypocrisy of their heart. You see that?

[13:38] So they come in secrecy. And now they're going to try to set Jesus up through flattery. Notice this in verse 21. So they ask him, teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. We know, Jesus, the true nature, the character of the content of your teaching. We know we can trust it. In other words, we can trust you to shoot straight even when politically and culturally it's incorrect. So then they ask their question, is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar? And of course, at the heart of this is this issue of belonging. Do we belong to God? Are you going to say that we belong to God as a teacher in Israel?

Or do we belong to the system? We belong to those who are over us. Does our nation belong to God? Or are we going to be okay with the fact that these Roman authorities, these Roman oppressors have come in?

Are we going to support their regime? Are we going to advocate their allegiance to them as being from God? In their minds, this was a yes or no question. It was a dilemma. Jesus had two options. And by the way, neither option was going to be favorable for Jesus. He was either going to say, yes, it's right for you to pay taxes to Caesar, tribute to Caesar. And the people were going to hate his guts because they were under severe oppression. Somewhere to the tune of 30 to 40 percent of their income was given to this oppressor in their mind. And they felt it day by day. They felt the strong hand of Rome that guided and governed their day-to-day decisions and restricted travel and exchange and trade. They were those who hated the imperial court of Rome. So if Jesus was okay with his tribute, certainly the people who had been hanging on his every word would now finally reject his teaching. But if Jesus said, no, you should not pay this tribute, then now he has the Roman authorities to answer to. He might be seen as an insurrectionist, seen as a threat to Rome.

And they could use that as a weapon against Jesus, which by the way they do in Luke chapter 23. It becomes a part of their criticism of Jesus to Pilate. He would have us even, he says, forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar and saying that he himself is Christ a king. That's what they say in Luke 23 before Pilate. But Jesus is not deceived by this group. He's not falling for their flattery.

And we find that in verse 23. He perceived their craftiness. In response, Jesus will say, so in verse 24, show me a Daenerys. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?

[16:52] They said, Caesar's. He said to them, then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. So here are these chief priests. Here are these scribes. They've come to Jesus.

And they're able to produce in an instant the currency of the government that they are supposedly against. They're operating under the authority already of that government. And they're doing business with that currency. Those coins that they would show, the Daenerys, had the image of Caesar on it. This coin had the emperor and the superscription on that was on it that said, Tiberius, son of the divine Augustus.

There's, in Jesus' mind, there's no either or question in his mind, but a both and question.

Notice his response. Give back to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar. It has his image stamped on it. It's his coinage. You are operating within his jurisdiction. It's a coin that has his imprint.

And so you give back to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar. You are under authority. You do business in this realm. You use the coins that bear his image. But the greater point is the second piece of this, where he says, give to God the things that belong to God. Well, what is that? Well, it's everything else.

[18:33] Everything else that doesn't belong to Caesar belongs to God. You, in fact, were made in his image.

So the image that's printed on this coin of Caesar bears the image of his currency. But guess what? The image of God has been placed on every person. And you bear the image of God. And so your life belongs to him. Your heart, your life, your future, your everything belongs to God. Give to God your everything. You belong to him. That's the point. You were made in his image. You belong to him.

So give God the things that belong to God. God's realm is transcendent. God's realm is over every other realm. You may live in a Roman governmental system, but God is over all. That's what we see in Psalm 24, verses 1 and 2.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. For he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. Do we realize that one of the greatest ways that we ourselves reject the stone in the same way as the scribes and the chief priests, the way that we reject the stone is by rejecting his belonging of us, his ownership of us.

Because the next verse is telling. We see that in verse 26. They were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said. But marveling at his answer, they became silent. They marveled. They were surprised. They wondered. They were in awe of his answer. 30 times this word is used throughout the gospel, the gospels, to indicate the marveling and the wonder and even the worship, the apparent worship of the people of his words and his miracles.

[20 : 44] And here is the marveling that happens again. But there's a lesson in this. It's possible to be amazed at God and never to believe in him.

It's possible to stand in wonder, to marvel, and even to be one he respects and reveres and just is blown away by the incredible nature of God and never bow the knee to him.

Never give your heart to him. Never trust him in faith. The marveling must move us to faith. The marveling of God must move us to a recognition of his belonging, that we belong to him.

It is possible to marvel, to be captivated, to be wooed, and never be saved. Have we given or have you given your life to Jesus? Have you entrusted him? He is overall.

You do belong to him, but have you entrusted yourself? Have you given yourself to God and recognize that exchange, that belonging? Or are we living like Jesus belongs to us?

[21 : 59] He does your bidding. He fixes your problems. He answers your prayers. He comforts your griefs. He serves your purposes. But for the most part, you've got it covered. And you can go day to day without ever thinking about Jesus. Because he belongs to you, rather than you belonging to him.

You barely give him a thought. So this question of the tribute is a question of ownership. And as we are reminded this morning in our time of communion that we were bought with a price.

You belong to Jesus if you've given your life to him. He is overall. In verses 17 and 18, we see that Jesus is looking directly at this crowd and he wants them to know, he wants them to be warned about the stone that the builders rejected.

May you not be like that in rejecting the stone. So the question from the scribes and the chief priests deals with the here and now. But the question from the Sadducees that we turn to in verses 27 to 40, we'll deal with the future, that your future life belongs to God as well.

We pick that up in verse 27. It says, There came to him some Sadducees who deny that there is a resurrection. And they asked him a question. Luke adds this little footnote for Theophilus.

[23 : 33] And remembering all the way back to the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, Luke is writing this account for this person named Theophilus. We really don't know who he is, but he wants to insert for him some information about the Sadducees, that they're the ones who don't believe in the resurrection.

Those Sadducees who were part of the elite class there in the constituency there in Jerusalem. They were the tippy top and they dominated the Sanhedrin, which was this group of 70 men that essentially made all the decisions for the nation.

This is that group. That group who denies the resurrection. And mainly because that group only adhered to or thought authoritative the first five books of the Bible.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Those books of the Bible that were kind of authored by Moses through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of course. This is a fairly quiet group throughout Jesus' ministry.

Really the first time that we see them in the Gospel of Luke. And they have this question. This question that we see in these remaining verses. And it's an interesting question because in their minds, they thought they found a way to disprove the resurrection.

[24:50] So those who didn't believe in the resurrection are posing this, what they seem to be, this impossible question, which will help to prove that there is no resurrection after all because of the conundrum that's created by laws in the book of Deuteronomy.

But Jesus will, of course, answer that question as we'll see in our passage. Verse 28 says, They asked him this question saying, In summary, this question refers to a passage of Scripture back in Deuteronomy.

And it deals with something that was known as the Leverite marriage. Leveri is, or Lever is a Latin word that means husband's brother.

And in this record or in this law, there were protections not only for a man, but also for his wife that were built in. Deuteronomy 25, 5 and 6, And the whole purpose of this was to ensure that the legacy or the heritage, of this brother, his name, his property, his legacy would continue.

So it was really a protection for the men of Israel. But also, by the way, as we saw a couple of summers ago in the book of Ruth, a protection for the woman as well.

[27:00] As you remember, Ruth and Naomi and the poverty that came upon them because of being widows in that place. And so this was a way to help ensure that she was going to have protections as well.

So they asked this question, In the resurrection, whose wife will she be? It really is an interesting question for two reasons. First, the resurrection that these Sadducees don't even believe in, they're trying to stump Jesus with this question that involves the resurrection.

And second, they pose this sticky question that doesn't appear to have a solution. And Christ responds. We see that response in verse 34.

Jesus said to them. The forcefulness, though, is really captured for us in the record of Matthew. In Matthew chapter 22, verse 29, Jesus comes with them in force when he says, You are wrong because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

You show ignorance of the Scriptures and you show that you don't understand the true nature of God. What's happening here? Well, the truth is, the essence of the Christian life is what at the heart of Jesus' statement.

[28:23] You are what you value. What are you living for? That's what Jesus is asking here. Every time we make a decision, it's a value decision.

No decision that we make is neutral. The decisions we make show what's really important to us. And here, they're demonstrating what they value.

Paul, in Philippians chapter 3, verse 8, talks about what the Christian life should treasure and value.

He says, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I've suffered the loss of all things and count them rubbish in order that I might gain Christ.

Well, what's the correlation here, Andrew? Well, the correlation is this. That whether it comes to things like extra sleep or leisure or the activities that we fill out our life with, wanting good grades, wanting to preserve friendships, that spot on the team, that future scholarship, that promotion, that home renovation, or that dream vacation, the decisions that we make show what we value.

[29:38] And there are times, I think, that the things that we value demonstrate that they're more important than the all-surpassing worth of Christ.

And that's what Jesus is trying to get at here. They're asking this question about heaven that's related to marriage and human relationship. And what they've forgotten is that marriage is not ultimate.

God is ultimate. And the joy that we have is not joy that's bound up in human relationships or even in the wonder, in the beauty of that fulfillment in marriage itself, the wonder of what we have and what we're looking forward to.

The thing that we can't wait for is the life that we have with God, not a continuing of this life. And that we belong to His family, we're not about making our own families.

And so by the very nature of the question of the Sadducees, they're bringing Christ down. They're making Christ equal or God equal to us.

[30 : 47] They're putting Him on our plane so that God is at the same level or even sub-level than the human relationships that we enjoy.

That's the essence of this question. What do you value? What are you living for? And the things that they were living for and demonstrated were a priority for them in this life.

They wanted those things to continue in the next life. Jesus wants them to know there's no marriage in heaven because marriage is not ultimate.

God is ultimate. Your future joy is not bound up in the human relationships that you can experience here. They're only meant to be a picture of the greater, fuller friendship that we have and union that we have with God in the future and even now.

So in a sense, Jesus is saying, how can you even ask such a question? How can you bring God down? How can you so misunderstand the essence of creation and the supremacy of the nature of God?

[31 : 57] Don't you understand what heaven is? And in verse 36, we find, for they cannot die anymore because they're equal to the angels and are sons of God.

Being sons of the resurrection. And in this, Jesus is trying to point them to understand how one even gets to enjoy the benefits of that heaven experience.

It happens as we belong to Him. And Jesus has been sharing that throughout the testimony of His ministry. Forgiveness of sins. He's talking about repentance and forgiveness of sins.

And time and time again, we find that Jesus is calling attention to faith. Your sins are forgiven. And so for those of you in this room who want to enjoy that experience of prioritizing who God is, it begins with a recognition, first of all, of what you really and I really deserve.

And that is, we deserve judgment from God. And yet God in His mercy has given us His Son who has lived the life we could never live, who died a death that we deserved in our place, and who extends to us something more than just forgiveness.

[33 : 14] He's extending Himself. God has given Himself to you. He's offered Himself to you. And He wants you to belong to Him.

He wants you to enjoy the relationship that only happens through faith in Christ and forgiveness of sins. So Jesus will then touch on verses 37 to 40 on this piece of the resurrection.

He doesn't want to let that go. He says, beginning in verse 37, but that the dead are raised, even Moses showed in the passage about the bush, where He calls the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

Now He is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him. Did you hear that? All live to Him. So Jesus goes back to the defining parts of the Scripture that they see as authoritative.

He goes back to the Mosaic Law, and He refers to this experience with the preeminent prophet Moses, and what He is experiencing at the burning bush, and God's testimony about Himself of being the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[34 : 28] And He uses the present form of the verb. I am the God, not I was the God, to help describe the continuing promises that are extended to those who are still alive in Him.

The promises that He will continue to address, and He will continue to extend to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is God's testimony of Himself.

And the point is that the patriarchs are not dead, and neither are God's promises to them. But then really this peace that I think drives home the point that Jesus is making there at the end of verse 38.

For all live to Him. You belong to Him. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You don't only belong to Him in this life, you're going to belong to Him forever.

God is over all, and all live to Him. And as Paul says in Romans 14, verse 8, he says, For if we live, we live to the Lord.

[35 : 35] And if we die, we die to the Lord. So then whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. Those who truly belong to Him will show the testimony of what they're really living for.

And if you want a picture, a window, to what that really looks like in your life, I think one of the greatest ways that we can see an accurate picture of what we're really living for is by the testimony of your expression of thanks.

Are you generally a thankful person or generally a complainer? Are you generally somebody who is satisfied with the things that God has done for you?

Are you generally critical? Paul will say, I have learned in whatever state I am to be content. I've learned to be content.

I know how to be abased. I know how to abound. I know how to be full. I know how to be hungry. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

[36 : 48] Why? Because Paul knew what he was living for. And he knew he didn't own or possess anything that didn't belong to God. It was free in his heart and life.

God could take. God could give. It didn't matter. It belonged to him anyway. And so the expression of Paul's heart was one that overflowed with great joy in thanksgiving.

He had learned in whatever state he was to be content, to be joyful, to be thankful. That's a pretty good reflection of what you're really living for.

Not to mention day to day, the looking to and loving and longing for Jesus. And so, of course, all that we enjoy because of what Christ has done for us is pictured for us in the symbols that we're about to take part of.

And the work of the broken body and the blood of Christ that was shed to make this a reality for those who accept Christ in faith, who ask forgiveness of sins.

[38 : 00] And so there's a transfer of possession that you don't belong to yourself anymore. You belong to God. God, in the nature of our life, will show what we truly treasure from day to day.

Let me pray for us. I'll ask the deacons to come forward and we'll take these elements. Lord, thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you that his answers to the chief priests and the scribes and the Sadducees here were so masterful and really got at the heart of the issue.

It was a heart of belonging. A heart of value. A heart of treasure. And recognizing why we exist in the first place. And Lord, I pray that you would help us.

Help us who do belong to you. To show the reality of that day by day. In a heart, in life that prioritizes you.

That you don't belong to us. You're not just a part of the background. But you're in the forefront. I pray that it would be true of us that we could say without even thinking about it, it could not be heaven without Christ.

[39:16] And that would reflect itself day by day. We can't enjoy life today without Christ. May that be true of us, Lord.

So help us. Whatever is in the way, whatever distractions there are, whatever competing affections there may be, whatever distractions and anxieties, fears, and even joys, whatever is in the way, Lord, I pray in this moment, even now, that we would give it to you.

It belongs to you. We trust you with it. We don't want it to be a distraction. So Lord, help us in that. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.