

What Have You Done With Life

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- [0 : 0 0] The passage on which I want to speak to you tonight is from Titus, the epistle that was read for you. Titus chapter 2, verse 11, and on page 201 of your Pew Bible, and I think you will find it helpful to read it and to follow it.
- So, it continues to be an overwhelming experience to preach to you on Christmas Eve.
- I think of you as enormously sophisticated, successful people, and I feel very inadequate in standing up to say anything to you.
- But I am constantly encouraged by the fact that I have very good news for you, which if by God's grace we as a group could hear that good news, we would be wonderfully rewarded for the time we spend, a few minutes as I trust it may be, looking at this word of God.
- We look at it in a week when part of what happens, what makes it difficult is our world is so full of tragedy. And for anybody to stand up and say there's good news is a bit of a fool.
- [1 : 3 1] We're surrounded by the tragedy. I just listed these. There's the technological tragedy of 747. And we're a technological society.
- We should be able to eliminate tragedies like that. There's the economic tragedy of world deficits so that we've probably mortgaged our children and probably our children's children to pay those debts.
- There's the global tragedy that in order to get the sun tan we appreciate, we have to replace the ozone layer, which isn't going to be easy.
- There's the people tragedy like living in a country of 25 million people that probably should have 100 million people living in it.
- And I'm not going to stop and argue that one with you. There's the human tragedy that one of the greatest and best gifts of God, our sexuality, is a gift we least understand.
- [2 : 4 5] And the suffering that that creates is enormous. And the thought is that in the face of these tragedies, surely we as a human community can band together to overcome these problems.
- But if you've ever tried to organize a community made up of human beings, all of whom are near to God's themselves, I say that in fact, not in derision, you, each of you, is a person of tremendous potential.
- You are virtually gods. And how you get gods to work together has been one of the problems of the world. The difficulty that most of us face is it takes 20 or 30 years of nurturing and education to prepare us for 20 or 30 years of taking a slice of the economic pie to guarantee our peace and prosperity, at which time we have 20 or 30 years left for the struggle against aging, decline, and death.
- And somewhere in the sequence of those years, we are faced with the agonizing question of what have I done with my life?
- And the bitterness of recognizing that I haven't had time to do very much, nor has there been the opportunity, nor have I known quite what to do.

[4 : 25] And if you're like me, you are almost rendered totally impotent in every way by the staggering dimensions of the problems that face humankind.

Now the good news. Because I think what we very desperately need to hear, and what it is my great privilege to share with you, not that I'm sharing with you something you don't know, but sharing with you something that you and I all need very much to be reminded of.

And what I want to share with you is two words from the passage. The first of them is grace, and the second of them is glory.

So in your Christmas meditation, you can hang it all on grace and glory. God's grace, you begin to be aware of when you recognize that you need to be forgiven.

And the good news is that you are. Far beyond anything you perhaps have ever become aware of. You need to be loved. And you are.

[5 : 53] No matter how lonely you may feel at times. You need to be known. And you are known. Even though there's much you don't know.

You are hopelessly compromised in the circumstances of your life. So often you get into a marriage counseling situation where a man and a woman are looking at their marriage of 20 years and saying, surely we can make it go.

But secretly one of them is compromised. And that isn't put on the table. And all of us, I mean, that's one of the situations we get into.

We're compromised with situations in our lives from which we need to be redeemed. And Christ has redeemed us.

We need to belong. We need to belong. Prickly as we may be. We do belong.

[7 : 00] Because someone has loved us. And laid claim to us. You may feel you're not just good enough. And you excuse yourself from any serious responsibility on the grounds that you really don't qualify.

Well, I'll tell you that it's not for you to say that you're not good enough. It may even be possible that the God who created the whole of the universe could use even you.

But then you may get to more serious levels of questioning and say, well, I simply can't believe. And you would be a true child of our culture and our society if you were to say that because our society says, I can't believe.

But again, it is the gift of God that allows you to believe as you open your heart to his word. You can say that the problems are too big and life becomes meaningless.

But they're not too big for the God who has acted towards you. You can say that you've been hurt too badly. And how often I hear that and how often I sense that and how often I feel that.

[8 : 22] Some people just have been hurt too badly. You say that there's too many hypocrites.

And there is. But the difficulty is that you're just another one of them anyway. And you can say that I want to be left alone.

Well, that option is there. But I don't think you'll hold on to it as long as it's there for you. You can say, well, what if grace doesn't convince me?

Turn to this passage. What does it say? It is a most remarkable statement. One that I think should trap your mind and hold it and not let go of it.

It says that the grace of God, which has appeared to all men, teaches us. Now, most of us think that what God has done to teach us is to bring tragedy or illness or circumstances on us, which are too big for us.

[9 : 37] But this passage says, no, it is the grace of God that teaches us. Now, where is the grace of God focused? The grace of God is focused in the person of Jesus Christ.

He is the despised and rejected one. He is the scourged and crucified one. He is the scorned and ignored one.

He is the one whom we hold in contempt. He is the one who stands among us whom we don't know. The one whom the Jews reject.

The one whom the Muslims ignore. And alas, the one whom the Christians are ashamed of. This is the one in whom the grace of God has appeared.

To train us and to teach us. You see, that's what happens.

[10 : 53] Is that God has come in Jesus Christ. And revealed his grace. When everybody expects and thinks God ought to come in a terrible cloud of wrath.

To bring justice on the earth. Before which none of us would stand. For a moment. But it's grace. In which he has revealed himself.

And that grace comes into sharp focus. In the person of Jesus Christ. And by that grace. By that grace. We learn.

And I suppose the danger we're under. In our kind of world. Is that we won't allow ourselves to be.

Trained by grace. To be taught by grace. And I beg and implore you. To consider this person Jesus Christ.

[11 : 56] To focus your eye on him. As he is portrayed in the humiliation of his birth. In the humiliation of his life.

As one despised and rejected. In the humiliation of his scourging and dying. On a cross. Stripped naked.

That is the revelation of the grace of God. God. And if the grace doesn't utterly convince you.

Let me go on to tell you a bit about his glory. Look at how this wonderful passage says. That the grace has appeared to train us.

And then in verse 13 it says. We are awaiting for the glory of God to appear. Now the difference essential.

[12 : 56] Between grace and glory. Is that in his grace. God has emptied himself. And revealed himself to us.

In the man of sorrows. Acquainted with grief. Suffering the humility of our humanity. Though he was God. But the glory of God.

Will be revealed. And it will. There will be no mistake. You see. Even those who sit here tonight.

I am sure. I mean I feel for you. I recognize. Because I am part of this society too. Can we believe that God has.

Infinitely humbled himself. In being born of a virgin. In a stable in Bethlehem. To reveal his grace to us.

[13 : 59] Could this really be God? God. And century after century. Through the whole of the time. Since that happened. There has been.

One movement after another. That has stood and said. It cannot be God. And yet the testimony.

To the person of Jesus Christ. Continues to be made. And people come to the place. Where they can no longer deny.

And are compelled to believe. And I read the lovely story. Of a man. Who ran and ran and ran.

From the presence of God. The whole of his life. Until God overtook him. And if you are such a person.

[14 : 55] Because I am convinced. That each one of you. Is in that place. Where God is not far from you. You may refuse to recognize it.

But it is there. But you can ignore him. You can ignore the revelation. Of his grace. But once you come.

To believe in him. You then await. The appearing. Of his glory. And you see. The glory of God. Is such.

That there will be no confusion. And there will be no mistake. When he came at Bethlehem. Nobody knew who he was. When he comes again. Everybody will know.

Who he is. And the position of the Christian. Is that he is. One who awaits. The revealing.

[15 : 52] Of the glory of God. In the face of Jesus Christ. In fact. For those of you. Who are having questions. About this person of Christ.

Look at this text. Do you see what it says? A most surprising thing. It says to us. We are awaiting.

The blessed hope. The appearing. Of the glory. Of our great. God. And Savior. Jesus Christ. You may not find that.

Very surprising. But it is. A very remarkable statement. Our great God. And Savior. Is Jesus Christ. And he is appearing.

And we as Christians. Await his appearing. And as we await his appearing. Then we are enabled. By God's grace.

[16 : 52] To do those things. Which it is God's purpose. We should do. So that our life. Instead of being. A picture of futility.

Against impossible. And overwhelming. Problems. That surround us. On every side. Is a life. Of faithful. Obedience. To that. Great God.

And Savior. Jesus Christ. Who will. In due course. Appear. And who has. As Paul writes.

To Titus. Claimed us. To be. A people. Of his own. Through whom. Through whom. He purposes. To work.

And the problem. That we have. As a people. And I wish. By God's. Holy Spirit. There might be. A great breakthrough.

[17 : 51] Among all of us. Even this night. When there's so many. Other things. On our minds. A great breakthrough. In which. We determine.

In the quiet. Of this service. That having been redeemed. By him. And purified. By him. And called.

To be. His people. We might be. Zealous. To do. His work. That is. We would allow him. To do.

In us. What it is. His purpose. To do. In order. That in the life. Of three score. Years. And ten.

And then some more. He might do. Through us. What it is. His purpose. To do. And the fulfillment. Of our life. Would not be.

[18 : 47] In some goal. Which we. By our own effort. Have achieved. And few. There be. Among us. Who will ever. Even approach. That. But the goal.

Of our life. Will be. The faith. That God. Has. In his grace. Accomplished.

In us. That which is. His purpose. And accomplished. Through us. That which is. His purpose. As we.

In faith. Wait. Wait. For the. Appearing. In glory. Of the one. Who has come. In grace.

To know. To know. His grace. Is to await. His glory. And we are.

[19 : 44] To await it. In the. In the. In the. In the. In the. In the. In the. Faith. Of patience. And joy. And in anticipation. Of the.

Appearing. Of our great. God. And savior. Jesus Christ. As we recall. His appearing. In Bethlehem. We wait. For his. We wait.

For his appearing. In glory. And while we wait. He takes. The bread. And wine. And says.

To strengthen you. Take this bread. Drink this wine. In remembrance. Of me. That you may know.

My grace. And with faith. May await. My coming. In glory. Amen. Amen.