

Title: Two Views, Two Lives, Two Destinies
Text: Hebrews 12.25-13.3
Theme: Living for what will last
Series: Hebrews #53
Prop Stmtnt: Since the Kingdom of Christ is unshakeable, we must live like it.
Aim: I aim to motivate my people to open their lives up to real friendship and mutual ministry.

Last night at 9pm, according to Harold Camping, the Rapture was going to take place accompanied by a world-wide earthquake that was going to knock every unbeliever on to the ground. Over and over, Camping said, "The Bible guaranteed it." But, when you read his explanation of how he came up with the date, he consistently distorts passages into saying something that they were not intended to say, but he claims that he knows better than anyone because the secrets have been revealed to him. Frankly, this guy is an embarrassment and a distraction to the gospel. Would it not be great thought if this morning we were around the throne? In a sense – we already are. Now, we do not have resources to take out a full page ad in USA Today, and purchase thousands of billboards around the country in an attempt to set the record straight. So, how do the real people of God put Christ on display in the midst of false prophet doomsayers and atheists? Well, how were the people of the book of Hebrews called to live in midst of first century life in Rome in a way that reflected the gospel? The answer may surprise you.

Read Text:

The history of our world is full of accounts of how mankind has attempted to describe and explain life. Things as they appear, have, at times been discovered to not really be things as they are. For example, for centuries, it was thought that the sun rose and set meaning that it was the sun that rotated around the earth. This assumption was given scientific and mathematical support by the Ptolemy, the 2nd century astronomer, mathematician and, actually, rather brilliant person. The problem with his mathematical formulas was that they did not always work. Around 1500 Copernicus startled the world with the pronouncement that it was the sun that was stationary and that the earth was in reality revolving around the sun, although it certainly appeared that the sun was moving around the earth. His pronouncement got him into much trouble with the powers that be. But not long after his pronouncement, Ferdinand Magellan ran into an interesting problem on his voyage around the earth. Two members of his crew were charged with keeping meticulous records of their trip, including the calendar. So, it was no small problem when Magellan landed on the Cape Verde Islands, west of the western coast of Africa, and his records indicated that it was July 9, but the calendar on the island indicated that it was July 10. I said it was no small problem because navigational charts, tides, positions, distances and other data was critical information for other voyages. If you lose an entire day in your records, you have a major problem with the credibility of your data. That, seemingly irreconcilable problem was resolved when it was discovered, that Copernicus was indeed right after all. Since the earth was rotating eastward and

Magellan was voyaging westward, they had gained an entire day. Things were discovered to be a bit different than how they had initially appeared to be.

Stephen Hawking is a 69-year old physicist, known as Britain's most eminent scientist. Noted for his theory that describes how black holes can emit radiation, his 1988, bestselling book, "A Brief History of Time" catapulted him to rock star status in the scientific community. You may have seen snippets of an interview with him were published this past week in which he said, "I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken down computers; that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark." He is postulating that there is no credible evidence for heaven, there is no scientific data to support it, so, it must be rejected out of hand. And yet, Hawking acknowledges that science has not yet discovered "a theory of everything" that is, a set of equations that describe every particle and force in the entire universe. If we did, Hawking says, "It would be the ultimate triumph of human reason – for then we should know the mind of God." One tension in the world of physics is Quantum mechanics because Quantum mechanics reveals that there are some things that happen in the subatomic world that cannot be predicted with exactness, which has led to the well-known "uncertainty principle."

Those of you who study higher math, you know of this. The rest of us just buy the books and set them on our shelves in hopes that our neighbors and friends who visit will be fooled into thinking that we are smart. But, here is my point. Here is one of the most brilliant mathematical minds claiming that although no one has come up with a satisfactory theory that explains everything, we can be certain about this – there is no heaven and there is no afterlife. Well, then comes the obvious follow-up question. If there is no heaven or afterlife, what is the purpose of life and how should we live? Hawking says, "We should seek the greatest value of our action."

I am fascinated to some degree by his response. How can an action be determined to be valuable? What system of measurement do you have that quantifies value of action? Would that not assume that something has value? What gives an action value? If the action of a person can have value, (presumably because it results in the good for people) then would that not also mean that people themselves have value? What gives them value? If, as Hawking asserts that "Science predicts that many different kinds of universe will be spontaneously created out of nothing" and that "It is a matter of chance which we are in", then how can you say that there is value to anything, much less that we must seek the greatest value? After all, to speak of the greatest value is a tacit acknowledgement that there is a moral code and an ultimate point of good.

All of this illustrates the point of this text. There are two views on life. View 1 is the view that listens to man's words as the final authority and View 2 is the view that listens to God's Word as the final authority. In View 1, you live for this present world. What you see, what you feel, what you possess, what you touch, is that for which you live. Which of View 2, you do not live for what you see; you live for what you cannot see. Your values are not determined by the things that you possess, or touch. View 1 reflects the views of those whose destiny is tied to this present earth. View 2 reflects those whose

destiny is eternally bound to the kingdom of God. Now, within the View 1, there is a group who thinks that they are part of View 2, but when you really look at the choices of their lives and their true values, they look like and sound like and live like View 1.

Last week I desperately wanted you to see the depth and height of joy that is present for the people of God before the throne of God. Today I want you to see what fuels that joy and what blocks that joy. View 1 says the goal of life is found in all that we can see and feel. Therefore the acquiring of material goods is what makes us happy. But how much joy do you see in a hoarder's convention? Seriously, are not the people who live trying to get it all and keep it all and who never learned generosity, the most miserable people on the planet? View 2 says that joy is found in the presence of God and that the people of God are going to revel in that joy forever and ever and that the source of that joy is not in things, but in God. Therefore (and this is a really big therefore), as we prefer each other over things, and love each other and minister to each other, what kind of affect do you think that will have on our gathering together?

Here is what I desperately want you to grasp. The things that keep us from experiencing joy like God desires for us is because we spend too much time and money on things that are destined to be destroyed while we ignore the people of the kingdom who are going to be forever. When we gather on Sundays there ought to be an intensity and excitement that is not generated by nor created by the personality of a leader, or a style of music, but by the dynamic that is present in the body. Sunday worship is, in part a time of rejoicing and celebration of what has taken place this past week. But it is not all rejoicing is it? Sometimes it is bearing each other's burdens. But, when we do that, when we own the concern of a brother or sister like our own, then when we gather to hear the word and sing the word and preach the word and respond to the word, we do it as a body. So, as I see the body I see that there is Deb and that I prayed for her mom this week. Now, as I hear the word, I am praying for Deb because I don't just hear the word and sing the word for myself but I hear it and sing it for others as well.

This book is targeting those who are in View 2 with encouragement to press on. But, this book is also targeting those who are View 1, but who think they are in View 2 by warning them. The warning is very clear from verses 25-27.

1. **Who are you listening to?** (25-27)

Follow the argument here. It is from lesser to greater. If God spoke then from Mt. Sinai and held the people accountable to His revelation, how much more are we accountable now that God has spoken through His Son Jesus Christ? Now, here is where Harold Camping is right. The world is going to end. But, when you violate the Scriptures and presume to add to the Word of God, you not only look like the idiot that you are, but you make it easier for people to reject it all. The truth is, the world is going to end. The shaking of Mt. Sinai by the voice of God was a foretaste of what is going to happen. The question for you (and me) is who are you listening to? Are you listening to View 1 that says this life is all that there is, and things have always been and will always be, or do you recognize that God is going to shake the earth and that things of this world are

temporary? How do you know if you are really listening to voice of God? Are you investing your life in what will remain, or are you investing your life in what is going to be destroyed? Ok, that is a really big question. Let's try to break that down. What did you do this week that reflected your view that this present world is doomed? This text shows us how and even as it commands us.

Man's Word cannot stand and God's Word cannot fail. We know that on one level, but do we really believe it?

2. **What are you living for?** (28-29)

Ok, here is it! This world will not live, the next one, cannot die. God's Kingdom is built on God's Word. The unshakable kingdom is the story line of the Bible and the Bible is God's narrative for all of creation. If you are living for anything else other than the unshakable kingdom of God, you are wasting your life. God is going to remake this world as the new creation, the new setting for His Son, King Jesus. The only people who will live in that eternal kingdom are those who know the King, who love the King, and who trust the King. If you have truly become a follower of the King, then your life is going to be governed by the priorities of His kingdom. That means that you have a desire to live out your national identity as the people of God. The loves of your king and his kingdom are your loves. The values of the King and the kingdom are your values. The laws of the king and the kingdom are your kingdom. And these laws are not mandated with threats as much as they are inscribed on your heart. Are you living for the King and his Kingdom?

Knowing what you know now, what if, five years ago, you had an opportunity to invest all of your life's resources into Bernie Madoff's Fund, would you do it? Why not? You wouldn't because you know that his entire investment scheme was a fraud and was destined to be completely destroyed and for the investors to lose everything.

Do you get my point? Everything is coming down in this present world. Everything that you can see, everything that you can touch, everything that you can possess now, in your hand is going to be gone – forever. Why would you invest yourself and all that you have into something that is destined to be completely destroyed when you have before you the opportunity to invest in that which cannot be shaken? Ok, so how do we invest our lives in the King and the Kingdom? Here are three commands that point us to it!

3. **How are you doing it?** (13.1-3)

a. **Love the family.** (13.1)

What is brotherly love? Giving someone what he needs, not necessarily what he wants. Christ is the supreme example of this. The people wanted circumstantial relief, but Christ knew that our real need is redemption. (explain gospel) this is critical to understand because otherwise we can give people what they want as a means to us feeling better about ourselves.

Is it really that important? Look 1 Peter 4.4 (verses 7-9). How does that verse begin? "The end of all things is at hand." Hmm, that sounds familiar – doesn't it? So, in view of the fact that we live at the edge and that Christ could return at any moment, what are we supposed to do? (look at verse 8) "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." Whoa! I will come back to that in a second. The commands to love one another are all over the New Testament. And they are concrete. (look at 1 John 2.18; 3.11-18) Why is this such an important issue? Why does John, James, Peter, and Paul all write extensively about this? They do so because how we love one another reveals what I really think about Christ (1 John 4.20). This is really a critical issue. Think about this for a minute. The Pharisees were so certain that they loved God, weren't they? But what happened when God showed up? They killed him because in reality, they hated him. What makes you think that you love God better? We can deceive ourselves, just like they did into thinking that we love God when in reality, we love the God that we have created in our own thinking instead of the God of the Bible. Love seems like an elusive term. So, God pulls out a tape measure in order to remove any doubt.

Go back over this past week. What did you do for others that could honestly be called an act of love for others? How did you prefer others who were not in a position to be able to repay? How did you give of your resources, time, or money, in an effort to help another brother or sister in the body? Some of you do and you are an incredible encouragement. Some of you do not, and you do not even think this way. And I must challenge you to question whether or not you even know Christ.

Keep in mind that this letter was not written with chapter and verse divisions. The chapter break creates a break in our thinking that divorces this command from what the author of Hebrews has just written. Now, think with me. What is the connection between our realization that we are under the reign of King Jesus and that we will be inheriting his kingdom and this command? The Certainty and Eternality and Finality of His Kingdom call me to live NOW in view of it. I must live for the glory of God by loving others in practical and tangible ways.

1) Jesus is not only our King, He is our brother. This means that fellow-believers are not only brothers and sisters to us, they have Christ as their brother as well.

2) Since we (together) are receiving a kingdom, and since we are already part of it, we have the calling to live now as we will live then. We will live then with perfect affection for one another. We will not only love perfectly, we will be loved perfectly. We will be open to being loved. We will accept love. Brotherly love is part of what remains after everything else is destroyed.

3) Loving others as we should is often threatened by things of this present world that are destined to be destroyed. We do not have time to love others. Why not? What is it that gets in the way of loving others? Giving to meet the needs of others assumes that

you know what those needs are. What have you done this week in order to make yourself aware of the needs of others?

4) Loving others can be exhausting. I need the reminder of the gospel and the hope of the kingdom to frame my motivation for serving others, otherwise I will wear out and fail really quickly.

b. Practice Hospitality (13.2)

Some of you are an incredible encouragement in this area. I see how often you invite people over to your home and how you love to meet people and be with people. But, honestly, while we are making some progress in this area, we have so much room for improvement. In fact, I really want you to think seriously about this. How can you practice hospitality? Peter writes that we should do this for each other in the body and the AH says that we should also do it for strangers (explain).

What is hospitality? It is inviting people to share a meal with you, often within your own home. Now, some of you get together with people that you already know, but how many of you came to church this morning, looking to invite people over to your home that you don't know? I am completely serious about this!! Think about it. What would happen if you made it point to invite people over to your home, even once a month, in order to get to know them? Ask people to tell you how they came to Christ! Share stories of grace, read a passage from the Bible and pray together.

Every month, we vote on new members. By the time that we vote on these people, they should have been in 5-6 of our homes, experiencing life in the body. That is church! When life is not being experienced on that level, then we feel compelled to have more programs in the building – which we do not need! Older people, invite younger people to your home! Younger people, invite older people to your home. Even if you cannot host something like that, invite each other out for coffee, do something!

Have you ever wondered why the people who were so attracted to Jesus, are often so un-attracted to his church? Could it be that we don't look or act much like Jesus? Why do we not do this? Because we are so busy. Doing what? What is it that we are actually doing? Usually, we are giving our time to things that will be destroyed.

c. Sacrifice for brothers/sisters being mistreated (13.3)

What would ever motivate a person to go to prison in Iraq and visit a believer who has been jailed, knowing that by visiting, that the one not in prison would be asking for persecution, the loss of all possessions and prison?

When we love each other like that – then the world will know that are real, whether or not they believe the gospel – they will know that we are real.