

Title: Tomorrow's Hindsight

Text: Hebrews 11.23

Theme: Living for eternity

Series/Occasion: Living for Eternity 2005 pt.1

Prop Stmt. Your view of tomorrow affects your values today.

Just a few miles north of here is a 150 year old cemetery called Clinton Grove. This cemetery is the burial ground for several people from our church and a number of famous and notorious people in the history of Macomb County, including judges, governors, and others. Several years ago a local historian used to offer tours of this cemetery as a way of telling people about the local history. Imagine that one section of that cemetery was where your family was buried and the tour guide was speaking about it....

When you come to faith in Christ, you are adopted into a new family and the true people of God, now become your people. Their history is your history. Their stories are your stories. Their graves are your family plots and their values are your values. Your story now becomes part of THE story as your little creek flows into the mighty river of God's people. In Peter's 1<sup>st</sup> letter he calls us "God's elect, strangers in the world." When you look at us through the lens of the world, we are strangers, for we do not live as if this is all that we have. But, even though we may from one angle be strangers, in truth we are people who have an eternal people to whom we belong. In 1 Peter 2.10 we read, "Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God." (SLIDE)

Here we are faced with the 2 ways to live.

I usually take the month of November and preach on the subject of Living for Eternity. Yes, we live in a materialistic culture where we are barraged with the lies that he who dies with the most toys wins. Yes, we live in a very temporary minded culture that is very prone to think short-term instead of long-haul. But, my purpose in preaching this series goes beyond that. I recognize that if you do not know where you have come from (rootedness) and you do not know where you are going (direction), then you will not know how to live (purpose). In this series, I am preaching as if you are a follower of Christ and you have come to the place in your life where you have repented of your sins and have trusted completely in the life and the death of Jesus Christ as the only One who can save you and you now are a follower of His. This means that you are in His family. You are part of His people. You are my brother or my sister – forever! When you and I were born into the family of God, we became a part of the people of God whose lives were marked by their trust in and obedience to God. We are people of the faith, which means that we are people whose lives are marked by faith in God. That is what the gospel is about. Romans 1.17 says that the one who is righteous will live by faith. We are people of faith and we are part of the historical people of God who lived by faith. Your life, your very life is a story of faith that is part of the Cornerstone story of faith. We stand on the shoulders of people of faith and we need to be reminded of that. We also need to know where we are going.

It is so important that you understand this truth – right now! We live surrounded with voices that are calling us to live for ourselves now! Michael Medved, author of “Right Turns” and several other works that reflect on the impact that our media culture has on the way that we think said, “Americans spend an average of 29 hours a week watching television – which means in a typical life span we devote 13 uninterrupted years to our TV sets! The biggest problem with mass media isn’t low quality – it’s high quantity.” On of the biggest problems with media is not the content – and the content is often terrible, but its’ omnipresence. We are facing the holidays! Media is the church of the world, marketing is their sermon, and stuff is their Savior. You are told over and over that you can have your best life – now. You can have it all – now. You can buy now, pay later. Christmas is only good if there are a lot of presents. The holidays are only good if everything is good – now. Youth, health, strength, freedom, beauty and prosperity are part of this me-first-now culture. It is a lie. It is a dirty, rotten lie. No one stays young. No one is beautiful enough, ever wealthy enough, free enough, or strong enough. But the images are so powerful and the lure to believe them is extremely intoxicating. You need to be ready for this. This world does not define you. Your possessions do not define you. God has defined you as being part of His people and calls you to live that way and make decisions now in light of that.

So, here is the big idea of this sermon. The people of God need to know where they have come from and where they are going, so they can know how to live – right now. You need to know where you have come from (who your people are), where you are going (destiny) so you can know how to live (priorities, values, decisions) right now. Stand back for a second and look at the Bible. How does it start? It tells you where you came from. How does it end? It tells you where you are going. All throughout these pages we are told over and over where we came from (who’s we are) and over and over we are told where we are going. We are people who have a past and a future that affects the way that we live in the present. Some of you have forgotten that. Some of you are making decisions right now, that are betraying your history and ignoring the future. These messages are a call for you to remember who you are, remember where you are going, and to live like it right now. We need to remember that we give up to gain.

Almost everywhere you look in the Bible, you see this theme. Story after story is recorded to tell us these things. This book of Hebrews in the NT is overflowing with it. In this book, which clearly focuses upon the superiority of Jesus Christ, we read the stories of people whose lives were driven by their faith. The person and the work of Jesus Christ is featured in these chapters. Here we can study His perfect work and how He tied all of the pieces together. This book begins by telling us that Christ is the perfect and the complete and incarnate Word of God who as the ultimate prophet brought the OT prophets together in Himself. He fulfills the prophecies of the Messiah for He is the king who will fulfill the final and complete kingdom. He is the champion priest who was faithful and offered up the perfect sacrifice that forever has abolished any need of any more sacrifice for sin. Christ is the perfect and final hero. His faithfulness sets the standard. He sets the mark and we keep the pace. The people of God, before Christ, lived in faith of the Messiah to come. The people of God after Christ live in faith of the Messiah who came and who will return. This is a hallmark of the followers of Christ.

This is one of our distinguishing features. We are people of faith. We are people who finish the job. We are people who complete our journey, run our race and finish strong. We don't quit. Pick up with me at the end of Hebrews 10 and notice the flow of the argument.

10.32-34 - Do you see the two points the writer is making? 1) Remember what you did in the past? You were faithful in the past because you were focused on the future. His concern was that now, they had lost sight of that. So, he is trying to re-establish that view and understanding of the future for them. Notice v.36 – “You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.” Then in v.39 we see how the writer screws this point into our hearts, when he writes, “But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.” Do you see it? Because of who we are, and because of our absolute confidence in God and His eternal plan, we are people who are faithful. We make decisions today that reflect the fact that we are living for eternity, not for today. We give up to gain.

Basically, this message has one big idea and it is this: Your view of tomorrow affects your values today. Or you could say: Your view of the future drives your priorities today. This morning, I want to introduce you to a young couple who lived this way. Their life is an example of this truth. These were people who reflected the Christ who was to come. Therefore, these people are also part of the mighty current of God's history that is carrying us along. These people are our people. Their story is our story because it is part of His story which is THE story. I want you to see this so that you and I can look at how their view of the future affected their daily priorities and see if we are living as we are called, the way these people lived as they were called.

Hebrews 11.23 (read). This verse is part of a section in Hebrews 11, which is not only telling us about the stories of our people. It provides for us a working definition of what it means to live by faith. Christ is the ultimate champion of this, and his followers are marked by this. Hebrews 11.23 is part of section in this chapter that shows us that faith is not afraid even when it is facing something that is bigger.

This verse is a summary of Exodus 1.22- 2.10. The Pharaoh had given an order that every boy that is born to the Hebrews was to be thrown into the Nile. He was trying to prevent this group from becoming a mighty nation inside of his own borders. So, this young couple put their baby boy in the Nile, except they put their child in a basket first. They had some spiritual insight regarding the significance of their son. They knew that he was here for a reason. God had given them a son for a purpose. Their view of the future affected their decisions of the day. Their faith in God and His purposes overruled their fear of the Pharaoh. This young couple had a boldness that enabled them to stand firm on what was right even in the face of the hostility of Pharaoh. They did not allow the system to determine their priorities. They were parenting for the future, not for the moment. Faith in God is larger than the pressure to do what everyone else is doing. This morning I am looking at the faith of the parents (Amram and Jochabed), but the text is very, very clear that their faith to be bold enabled them to not wilt under the pressure from their society and that faith was then seen in a mighty, mighty way in their child.

Moms and Dads, brothers and sisters please understand what is happening here. Do you realize that when Moses was born, his people had already been in Egypt for 350 years? Amram and Jochabed were slaves. That is all they had known. Their families were slaves, cousins were slaves, aunts were slaves, uncles were slaves, in-laws were slaves. Everyone was a slave. That was the system. That was the way things were, and there was no logical reason to believe that it was ever going to be different. There was no political reason to think that their circumstances would ever change. There was no military force that posed a threat to the status quo. They had no legitimate basis to think that their children would ever have any hope to have any chance of living a better or different life. They did not go to school. They did not travel. They did not have rights. They did not have their own land, nation government or laws. They were slaves, and for several hundred years, all of their ancestors were slaves. Do you see it now? Faith is thinking free in the middle of slavery! They chose not to be bound in their thinking to the system of the world and their hope in the God of the future set them free to make decisions today that set into motion a chain of events that changed history, and is now our story. This is who we are!

### **1. God uses the Faith-driven decisions of parents to change their kids.**

When I was growing up, my family went to church on Sundays. Anything else that we did revolved around church because that was priority. As I grew up I had to figure out for myself if that priority was going to be my priority, but a very powerful truth was consistently modeled for me. I am really amazed how inconsistent this basic concept is to so many people, who allow so many things to interfere with this.

Parents, the priorities that govern your use of time, use of money, scheduling, and plans for your children reflect a heart that takes the Word of God as your authority, or the words of your world as your authority. You are teaching your children to either go along with the culture of this world, or you are teaching them to embrace the heart of God. Your children are under tremendous pressure to be sexually involved because “everyone is doing it.” Your children are under tremendous pressure to drink and drive and make all sorts of life-threatening decisions for the simple fact that “everyone is doing it.” The “everyone is doing it” or the “that’s how you get ahead” in the world thinking is so powerful that it often trumps all logical sense. When we warn them about peer pressure we are trying to teach them the concept of “give up to gain”, but what is our example? You need to model for them and seek to reach them at the heart level (vs. just talking about their behavior) what it means to make decisions that reflect the fact that you place a higher value on God than anything else. Your decisions ought to reflect the fact that you consider your future with God to be more precious and certainly more satisfying than any future this world can offer.

I will be specific. Dads, let’s say that work offers you some overtime and you would really like the extra cash for the upcoming holidays, but the overtime means that you will miss being in church. When you choose that over church you have just preached a sermon that says, I place a higher value on some extra cash than I do on the value of

obeying God, hearing His Word and worshiping Him. Give up to gain. When you sign your children up for athletic teams that practice and play on Sundays, you preach a sermon that says, this is more important than God. Sure, “everyone may be doing it” and “this is how you get ahead” but there is something more important than that. You need to be convinced of that. As people of the faith, we do not make decisions based upon how can I help my kid get ahead in this dying and decaying world. We are called to teach our children how to make decisions based upon a faith in God that trumps the pressures of this world. We give up to gain.

2. God can use the faith-driven decisions of parents to change a nation.

**3. God uses the faith-driven decisions of parents to show off Jesus.**

One of the consistent themes in the life of Christ was His complete allegiance to His Father. This brought him into so much conflict that He was eventually crucified for it. He did not make it His goal to please His world, but to please His Father. He stood, resolute, and unmoved in the face of pressure. That is exactly what Moses’ parents did, having no idea that their example would be lived out in the life of their son, and told for thousands of years to millions of people, the world over. This was just a young couple, who made a faith-in-God-instead-of-people decision and in so doing they were a preview of Jesus who was to come. Dads, moms, your calling as parents is not to help your kids excel as far as this world is concerned. 30 seconds into eternity will it really matter if they get a sports scholarship to a big 10 school or launch a successful career in business if they do not really trust Christ? Your little decisions are part of a value system that either reflects God’s priorities or someone else’s. And no one else can save your soul or the souls of your children.

Hebrews 12.2 – give up to gain - communion