

Live in the Light of Eternity

(Re)Discovering What Matters Most

“...Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Luke 12:15

How many of you have ever played Monopoly? Or scrabble? Poker? Texas Hold ‘em? Cribbage? Or Pinochle? Yahtze? Candyland? Even a card game of “Go Fish”?

Almost everyone has played a board game or a card game. And when you play a game, the object is to accumulate more points, more money, more territory, to own it all - to somehow come out the winner!

In many ways, your life is like those games. In this game of life, we often play to win, to gain more money, more territory, to somehow achieve whatever it is we believe is “success.”

In the game of Monopoly, if you win, you want all your piles of cash and all your properties to stand as a lasting testament to your skill and cunning and shrewd dealing. But the most important lesson of any board or card game is this: after the game is over, it all goes back in the box.

All those houses and hotels. All that property – Boardwalk and Park Place, the railroads and the utility companies. All those thousands of dollars. *When the game is over, it all goes back in the box.*

Because, you see, **The game is only temporary.** None of the points, none of the money, none of the properties last. You can *act* as if the game will go on forever. You can *believe* that the game will go on forever. But it will not. Not for me. Not for you. Not for anyone.

There is an ancient Italian Proverb which says: **“Pawn and king alike, they all go back in the bag.”** ~ Ancient Italian Proverb

The game called Life will one day end for all of us. The covid-19 pandemic that we are in drives this message home every day.

This week the number of people confirmed to have the coronavirus, and the number of people who died from this killing virus DOUBLED – in one week. The United States now leads the world with the most deaths from this silent killer. Every day the news is grim and the number of deaths just staggers the mind. The number of people who have died is so big that its hard to even comprehend that each number represents a real person, a life taken from family and friends. They were ordinary people like any of us.

They didn’t do something wrong. They aren’t people who lived only far away from us. They are people from our community – maybe you personally know someone ill or who has died. They were poor, rich, middle class, of all races, some very healthy, some chronically ill, from all sorts of jobs. Married, single, and widowed. None of that mattered. These were normal people like you who simply took a breath of air as we all must. Unknowingly they inhaled an unseen, silent virus.

Doesn’t this pandemic make you stop and think that it could just as easily be you who caught it? Your life could have been just as easily suddenly ended?

This pandemic makes me think about different things, important things, life-and-death things.

- Suddenly, calling family and friends is much more important to me.
- I remembered that my will hasn’t been updated since my kids were little. It just never seemed urgent enough for it to be a priority to me – but now it is.

- I have wondered whether my wife and family would be OK financially if I died at this age. Would I leave them in a mess of problems?
- I've stopped to think seriously about whether I've been husband and father and pastor I set out to be.

I would imagine that I am not alone – that many of us have found ourselves facing the reality of our mortality, and the possibility that death may come earlier than we thought it would.

There was an author in the Middle Ages who wrote these words: ***"Wherefore play the game of life warily, for your opponent is full of subtlety, and take abundant thought over your moves, for the stake is your soul."*** ~ the Middle Ages, author unknown

In the game of Monopoly, at stake is the pride of winning a pile of money that, after all, is only fake money, and means nothing once the game has ended.

In the game of life, we form an idea, a belief in our mind about what "success" is for us. And we spend our time and energy to achieve that "success" – whatever that is for us.

For some, success is having cars, and investments. For others it's fun vacations, or being well known and well- liked by others. Maybe for you it's enough savings to live comfortably without worry. For others, its developing a skill, learning more, or being the best at some ability.

Jesus told a story about a guy who was really good at playing the game. If he lived today, he would have climbed the ladder all the way up to being the company Vice President, and from there CEO. Today he would jet around the country on a private plane, making deals with powerful and wealthy people. He would be well connected, written up in Forbes, and known in the halls of Washington. He was a business genius who brought his company through several expansions and new product developments. Sales were up. Profits were off the charts! Then the opportunity of a lifetime came his way. This was the big deal he had been waiting for. He knew if he could land this one, he would be set for life! It would be easy street from here on out.

Here's how Jesus tells the story: This man said to himself, ***"You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."***

²⁰***But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"***

²¹***"This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."*** Luke 12: 15-21

Notice that Jesus doesn't condemn the man for being rich. This man probably bought his property honestly, and didn't cheat or swindled anybody. He is honest, highly respected, hard-working, and people envied him.

What Jesus condemns this man for is having a mistaken, warped idea about what matters most in life. He was like many of us, forgetting that what's at stake is his soul.

What mattered most to him was:

What Matters Most

1. Harvest large crop
2. Build bigger barns
3. Achieve financial security
4. Eat

5. Drink,
6. Be merry
7. Remember not to die

God is no where on the radar screen of his thoughts. Everyone would call him a “success.” But God’s word for him is just the opposite. God calls him: “you FOOL!”

Jesus calls him a “fool” because he had forgotten the most fundamental and important truth. This guy forgot that he is mortal, this life is only TEMPORARY, and his relationship with God is more precious, more important by far than anything of this life.

Friend, have you made this man’s mistake? Have you – maybe not intentionally – been distracted by earthly things. Is your mind and your concern all about what’s happening, what’s the newest and latest tweet or meme or video posting? Are you racing through life, but have shallow relationships? Do you have a frenzied schedule, and a preoccupied soul?

No one sets out in life to live for only shallow and temporary things. But in time, we get distracted from what really matters. We drift into seeking – possessions, money, looks, power – the things we think they will bring us fulfillment. But it’s a sad joke! Because when we check out of this life, we have to give them all back. They’re just on loan. They’re not ours – never were ours. They all go back in the box.

Folks, the stakes in this game of your life are the HIGHEST! At stake is your soul, your eternity. Is your belief of what makes a successful life only earthly and temporary? Does it just go back in the box?

I know the pandemic, the isolation, the tragic news daily can feel overwhelming right now. We are a society that is emphasizes living the good life now, and pushes into the background any thought of death. Yet, right now, we come face to face with how fragile and temporary our lives are. Our mortality is in clearer focus than it normally is. This is leading many, many people to stop and re-evaluate their lives and their priorities.

A good exercise for all of us to do is to take a pad of sticky notes, and a marker. And write the word “Temporary” on several sticky notes, and stick them on things around you. Stick the word “Temporary” on your car, on your house, on your check book, on your big screen TV, on your awards. Stick the word “temporary” on your prescription bottles because your health will not last. Put the word “Temporary” on your make-up to remind you that physical appearance is not a lasting goal to strive for. And put one on your computer or your phone – because all the opinions of the people in your contact list, all the friends you have on Facebook – their approval or disapproval is only temporary. They are not something to center your life on.

Then take the pad of sticky notes and write the word “Eternal” on several. Stick these notes on those things that will last beyond this life. Stick the word “Eternal” on your spouse, on your kids, on your neighbors. Put one on your boss. Put one on your grouchy neighbor and one on the person who dislikes you the most, and the person you dislike the most. Then stick the word “Eternal” on your Bible. *“The Word of the Lord stand forever.”* And stick one on a cross in your home – to remind you that God’s love and the work of Jesus on the cross, never fades or spoils. His love lasts into an eternity with you.

This is what Jesus is trying to get through to you today in His teaching about the rich fool. Don’t build your life on what will not last. Build your life on what is truly important and eternal. Your relationship with Christ Jesus. Your relationship with other people. Your acts of love that flow from faith in God’s love to you. These are worthy of your life.



This man believed “success” was money, more money, possessions, and fame. As he lived for those stakes, he *won* the game. He was rich beyond our wildest imagination. He wanted more wealth, so he built one of

the greatest financial empires of his day. He wanted more pleasure, so he seduced or paid for the most glamorous women money could buy. He wanted more adventure, so he set airspeed records and designed, built, and piloted the world’s most unique aircraft. He wanted more power, so he acquired political clout that was the envy of senators. He wanted more glamour, so he owned Hollywood studios, and courted stars.

But here’s how Howard Hughes’ life ended: He was emaciated – 120 lbs. stretched out over his 6’4” of height. He had a thin scraggly beard that reached halfway down his sunken chest. His fingernails were hideously long, grotesque, yellowed corkscrews. Many of his teeth were black, rotting stumps. A tumor was beginning to emerge from the side of his head. He had innumerable needle marks. Howard Hughes was an addict – a billionaire junkie.

Here’s the question: if Howard Hughes had pulled off one more deal, made one more million, tasted one more thrill, would it have been enough?



She was the most adored of women. Every woman envied her; every man wanted her. She had beauty, money, wealth, and so much fame! But Marilyn Monroe died alone, died of her own hand.

Here’s the question: if she had had one more hit movie, one more magazine cover, one more sexual relationship with a powerful man, would it have been enough?

What is success in God’s book? What does He show us is most important to Him? If Jesus had a pad of sticky notes and a marker, what would He label as worthy of His heart?

He would put His sticky note, His label of what is most important to Him, on you! He would put it on your forehead. In fact, He already did just that, didn’t He? In your Baptism, He place His cross on your forehead, water was poured over you *personally*, and God placed His name on you. He marked you forever as His forgiven child. You are His loved and cherished, son or daughter.

A life of success in Jesus’ book, was not gaining the riches and fame of this world. Instead, He gave it all up. His reputation, His good name, His comfort, His possession, even His life – He gave it all up to win you back to Him. He went so far as to die on a cross the forgive you – completely, and forever.

Last Sunday we celebrated Easter. Jesus resurrection is God’s powerful demonstration that Jesus is the first to rise from the grave. Death could not hold Him. And because of His victory over sin, and death, and hell, the grave is not the end for you either. He has won, and offers to you as His free gift, life eternal. Heaven forever more. **THIS GIVES YOU HOPE**, and peace, and purpose for living, especially as you go through trying times as these!

Now, more than any of us living can ever remember, we, and the people of our nation, are faced with the truth of our mortality. Our lives are temporary. But God, His truth, His love, your soul – these stand forever. So friend, there is nothing more important than for your relationship with Him to be the most important, your highest good, your prize, your love.

Spend TIME with Him! Get to know your God and His love more and more. Spend time every day in the Bible. Have a devotion time alone or with your family. Join a Bible study group. Worship Him EVERY week.

And let His love overflow out of you to people around you. People He made, and loves, and whom Jesus gave His life for. Your acts of love, truly make a difference!

Folks, the day is coming, when all our 401K's and our bank statements will be irrelevant. The titles on our resumes will no longer impress anyone. GPAs and SAT scores, and college acceptances will be long-forgotten. No one will know what clothes hung in our closet, or what cars sat in our garages.

All that will be left is love – love for God and love for others. Everything else is going back in the box.