

Live In The Light of Eternity
Finding Lasting Security



*That plain little Mack did a plain little thing,
He burped!*

And his burp shook the throne of the king!

- Dr. Seuss

I want to begin today by telling you a profound story by a deep thinking philosopher named, Dr. Seuss.

There was a turtle who ruled over little pond of turtles. At least he *thinks* he rules over the pond. His name is Yertle.

One day Yertle decides his kingdom needs to be bigger, so he sends out a decree that all the turtles should be stacked up to become Yertle's throne. The king lifts his hand, and the whole pond scrambles to obey. First dozens of turtles stack themselves up, then hundreds. From his throne up there Yertle could see for miles.

Yertle thought his throne was as secure as a throne could be. But then, on the bottom of the turtle stack, there was an obscure, powerless turtle named Mack. Here's how Dr. Seuss tells the story: *"That plain little Mack did a plain little thing. He burped! And his burp shook the throne of the king!"*

King Yertle had a great fall. All the king's horses and all the king's men, couldn't put Yertle together again.

The story of Yertle teaches us one of life's most important lessons: We think we are in control. But we are not.

Right now we are in a time that is very difficult on us. It is not only difficult physically for people who fall sick to that little unseen bugger of a coronavirus. This is not only a difficult time financially for people who

are out of work, or whose retirement investments in the stock market have fallen flat. The times we face now are not only difficult emotionally for everyone who is in grief for having lost one of the more than 60,000 people who have died over the last month. This is a difficult time psychologically for all of us because we feel a loss of control over our lives.

Kids are home all day, out of school. Parents are out of work, or have had to turn a card table in the basement next to the furnace into a modified work space. Stores now tell you to wait in line before you can go in. You can't go out to enjoy a pizza or a beer in your favorite restaurant. On and on it goes right now – we are all struggling to deal with a new reality that we have very little, if any control over at all!

A recent Department of Health and Human Services survey of American sentiment discovered that the people of our country are feeling anger and loss. Anger, because they have no control over a large part of their lives.

This is so hard on us because by nature, we *want* to be in control. We *NEED* to be in control for our egos to survive. Yet, the truth is, Mack burped. We are not in control of our lives. Control is an illusion.

There is a billboard – maybe you've read it – that says:

**If you want to make me laugh,
Tell me your plans.
- God**

That is not to say that everything you do is predetermined, and you are just a robot. You *DO* have a choice. You can choose: the clothes that you wear, the kinds of foods you will eat, and where you live. You can choose to reject God in your life. You can choose if you will dwell on past resentments or live in forgiveness and peace, and you can choose the kinds of thoughts you choose to think.

But you cannot choose the day and place of your birth or the family you were born into. You cannot choose your physical make up, the color of your hair, nor your natural abilities. So many of the people and events that shaped you to be the person you are today, had nothing to do with your choosing. The actions of the people around you that have such a BIG affect on your life, -- the BIG events that

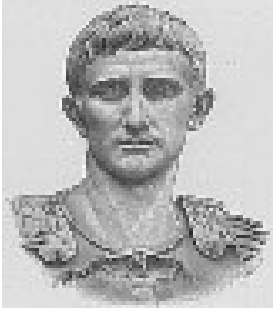
have made you who you are today -- all are beyond your control. Much of what happens in your life each and every day is not of your choosing. Control of life is an illusion.

The summer after I graduated from High School, I could not decide where I was going to go to college. I had a list of 3 colleges, and narrowed the list because 2 of them turned out that I did like them, and I didn't want to go there. So in August of that summer, almost out of desperation, I enrolled in college at Concordia University in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I hadn't really *planned* to go there. I hadn't really given it much thought. It was just the last and only option open at that time. So I went.

Within a few months, I became friends with a guy who would later be best man in my wedding, and I started dating Sue, who would become my wife and best friend. Had I not gone there, I never would have had the wife and the children I have, never would have discovered God's grace, and my calling in life; I wouldn't be here today. All of these things, were not by my planning and control. I'm not that good at controlling my life – nor are you at yours. The truth is, our lives are not our own to control. But ... oh, how we try!

And we aren't satisfied trying to control our own lives. We want to control other people too. At work, you want things done *your* way. Your desk, your classroom, your card table next to the furnace is *your* little kingdom. At home, you demand that chores are done just as you command. Beds are made just as you prescribe. Family members are there not for you to love and enjoy, but as pawns to make you look good.

You see, when you live with the illusion that you control other people, then other people are a problem. They do not behave the way you want them to, so you try to find some way to manipulate them, intimidate them, or boss them around. All of this, of course, is wrong, and selfish, and sinful. God commands us to love others as He has loved us, -- not rule over them, manipulate, and coerce them.



This man was the most powerful person in the world. He sat on a throne in Rome. He rose through the ranks by eliminating all his competition. His control stretched north up to England, south to Africa, and east to Asia. He controlled more than 3 million square miles – that’s more than the main land United States. The world had never seen anything like it. This man literally ruled all the then known world. He ruled rulers. He was called king of kings. His rule was known as the “peace of Rome” only because he had defeated all his enemies, and his army was so strong that no one could stand up to challenge him. The Roman Senate said he was “grand” and “majestic” – an august person. He is Caesar Augustus.

People literally worshipped him. Ever have that happen to you? – You walk into your house and your family members bow down, saying, “We’re not worthy! We’re not worthy!” ... Caesar did.

At one point he had an army of 500,000 troops – half a million soldiers! That took a lot of money. So he decided to tax all the people he ruled. In the Bible, Luke records it:

“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.” Luke 2:1

Because of that decree, Mary and Joseph left Nazareth, and went to Bethlehem because Joseph was a descendant of King David, and Bethlehem was King David’s boy hood town. That’s where Jesus was born – In Bethlehem – a little one traffic light village. Born of peasant parents who were “nobodies” compared to Caesar Augustus.

It’s funny, though, 1200 years before, God promised David that the Savior would be a descendant of his. And 700 years earlier, the Bible foretold that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. So God works out His plan to bring a Savior for the whole human race, a descendant of David, born in Bethlehem – a plan laid down for centuries. And

HOW did it come to pass? Caesar Augustus would have told you it was because of him. Caesar was in control. But what King really was in control? Even in control of Caesar?? You see, control, is an illusion.

There is a story of a missionary who was talking about Jesus to the chief of a tribe. The chief tried to impress the missionary with gifts of horses, blankets, & jewelry. Missionary replied, "My God doesn't want the chief's horses, blankets, and jewelry. My God wants the chief himself."

The chief smiled, and said, "You have a very wise God. For when I give myself to Him, He also gets my horses and blankets and jewelry."

Do you understand what the chief understood? If God owns you, then He's got control over everything that's yours.

One of the biggest illusions we fall for is that I control my stuff. It's the false belief that my money, my house, my car, my investments, my toys – all of that is MINE, and I can do with it whatever I like.

DOES God own you?? Do you believe that Jesus died on a cross to pay for your sins? Jesus' died not JUST pay for sins – He died to pay for **YOU!** Jesus bought YOU as His own.

God already had a claim on you and all people & all things. He created you and everything. It's all His. He owned it all before any of us came into this world. And God will continue to own it all after we are all dead and gone from this world. It's His. Even everything you call "mine" and try to control.

Yet, God owns you 2 times. Once because He made you. Second because Jesus paid for you with His life, The Bible says: ***"You are not your own; you were bought at a price."*** 1 Corinthians 6:20 That price, was the price of Jesus' life. So ... If God owns YOU, then the idea that you are the Master, the Controller, of your life is just a dream. And so is the idea that you control your stuff.

Owning stuff is not what life is about. Owning stuff cannot make you free and happy. It cannot make you secure, because you can't keep it – you can't take it with you when you die. God says in the Bible:

“We brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it.” 1 Timothy 6:7

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will

depart.” Job 1:21



There’s not going to be a U-haul trailer with your stuff behind the hearse at your funeral!

Folks, one day, you will have to give an account for how you have used all you have. The real owner is God. The Bible says:

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” Psalm 24:1

“Remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.” Deuteronomy 8 ;18 That means, even what you earn, you have not because you worked for your paycheck. God gave you your intelligence, your skill, your time, your energy -- so you *could* work and earn a paycheck. So everything you have is a gift from God.

See folks, our control of our lives is *just* an illusion. And still we all want to do something with our lives that really counts, something that really lasts, something that makes some difference in the big scheme of this world. And to make your life really count -- **Say “Yes” to Reality : Surrender everything to God.**

The reality of this world is that you and I were born into Someone Else’s kingdom. So, you and I need to resign as the controller of our lives. The Bible’s word for this is “surrender.” I crown ANOTHER to be Master – Lord – of my life. I offer my gifts, energies, resources, and heart to Him.

Surrender is not being passive, or just giving up. It is saying YES! To God, and YES to life each day. It is accepting the gifts God HAS given me. And letting go of my envy or my desire for what He has NOT given me.

I surrender my ambitions, my dreams, my money, my relationships, my marital status, my time, and my desires to God.

Surrender means I accept reality.

And the greatest gift God has given to you, is that He has given His Son – Jesus – for you. The Bible says:

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” 2 Corinthians 8:5-9

Jesus lived for you, and gave His life for you. He paid for your wrongs. Now, He gives you His best free gifts – forgiveness, hope, heaven, a real love and joy and peace in your heart, purpose and meaning in life, and gratitude for all that God has given you.

Through Jesus, God even forgives us for the sin of trying to be Master and controller of our lives, our stuff, other people, and our world.

Folks, God promises:

“He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all – how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?” Romans 8:32 God’s promise to you is that, since He’s given you Jesus, **YOU CAN TRUST HIM** to give you all you really need.

So you can surrender control. We are all struggling with this right now. So much of your life right now, would not be what you would choose. Government authorities are telling all of us what we can and can’t do. It’s all because of a killer mutant virus that we have no protection from.

So if you’re struggling with this now, You don’t have to be king Yertle. Instead, you can live **FILLED** with joy and gratitude. Give all your life over to God. Surrender. Resign from being the controller of your life. Give everything into His hands: your possessions, your finances, your career, your family, your hopes and dreams. And start with your heart. If God has your heart, He’s got all of you.

And **TRUST** Him with all of you, because in great love for you, God’s given His stuff to you to use and enjoy, and on top of it all, He’s given Jesus to give you forgiveness and eternal life.

AMEN.