

Devotions – February 26 – March 4, 2017

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Sunday, February 26, 2017

I had an opportunity to see a movie with my family between Christmas and New Year's. The film we watched was called *Collateral Beauty*. It is a movie that deals with human pain, suffering and loss, uniquely framed within these three words **Love, Time, and Death**. The story opens with the following words; *"We long for love, we wish we had more time, and we fear death"*. I walked from the film with a message suggesting that there is beauty found in these three words, Love, Time and Death. I am profoundly interested in these three words as they are so deeply connection to everything in life. In this week's devotions, I will reflect on these three words: Love, Time and Death.

What is Love?

We've heard it over and over that God is love and that God loves us with an unfailing love. But how can we be sure that God's love is real? My confirmation Bible verse (John 3:16) tells me how "God so loved the world that he gave his only beloved Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." So, love is a gift given by God... I think love is what makes life worthwhile. For instance, walking on the beach in the morning dawn with someone you enjoy spending time with. While cuddling your baby so-ever tight keeping them safe from the world's harm as you look into her tiny face hoping for a smile. Love is when a grandparent travels across the state to cheer on their grandchild telling them how proud they are of them. Love is self-giving... To offer one's self is the greatest gift anyone can ever give. God did exactly that, by giving his Son out of love!

"whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love." 1 John 4:8

"the Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." Jeremiah 31:3

"But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us" Ephesians 2:4

Let us pray:

Thank you, God for your gift of love too wonderful for words. Help us to receive this gift of love that it would transform our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



Monday, February 27, 2017

Love that Saves

The gospel writer John reveals that Jesus is God Himself, who became human like us, to live with us, in order to save us. Jesus saves us from sin, our doubts, and offers us eternal life with Him... Through the life and death of our Lord Jesus, we can see God's amazing love and compassion poured out from the heart of God for us as a gift. God is love and God's love Saves!

My wife and I have five children and I pray for them daily for their health, their safety and well-being. Even though our children were born into our family and carry our name and facial appearances, our love is not enough, to save them. Only God's love offers true salvation. They are on loan to us as a loving-gift from God. Love is the greatest gift from God... and love saves!

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth". John 1:14

Let us pray:

Dear Loving God, help us to learn the song of your love, help us to celebrate it. It is an absolute need; just as the body cannot survive without food, the soul cannot survive without your love. Your love is our well-spring and nourishment and the door to your eternal life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Tuesday, February 28, 2017

Time - Taken for Granted

What is time? Time is something we manage; time is something we waste, time is something we spend, something we save. We feel like time drags, we see time fly by. I asked a group of elders from our church before our weekly Bible study: "What is your understanding of time?" Answers varied from: an illusion, to a gift from God, something we will never have enough of, time is the past, present, and future. What does time mean to you? Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 says; "there is a time for everything." Time has also been referred to as season. Genesis 1:14 says, "*God is the creator and master of time and time begins at creation.*" Therefore, time is a gift from God, not to be taken for granted or wasted.

Everything Has Its Time

3 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

2 a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

3 a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5 a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

*a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
6 a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
7 a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
8 a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

Let us pray:

Gracious God, teach us your ways, O Lord. Help us to understand that time is an immeasurable gift given to us your children... that we might realize that time is more precious than gold. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Wednesday, March 1, 2017

Time - is Precious

Time is a precious gift, preciously created by God. God is helping me to under the preciousness of time. As I make the pastoral rounds from hospital room, to the nursing home, to the living room, I am constantly reminded by the persons whom I am visiting, “their time is running out.” They want more time... more time to spend with their wife, more time so that they might see their grandchild graduate from high school, a little more time that they may see their daughter walk down the aisle for her wedding. Hearing their stories makes me want to be a better steward of the time God has given me. For so many years I have filled my life with a cluttered schedule and meaningful meetings. I feel the need to focus on building deeper relationship with my peers, my children who will soon be moving off to college. As I grow older I am beginning to see the value of God’s created gift call time.

Let us pray:

Gracious God, I want nothing more than your presence in my life. Enable me to use the precious gift of time more wisely, according to your plan for me. Send your Holy Spirit to inspire me, guide me, and empower me. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen



Thursday, March 2, 2017

Death – a Stranger

The idea of death scares us, we fear it, it haunts us like nothing else; we overcome it by denying it. The fact of the matter is that death is all around us. Death is everywhere and it has many faces. We have all lost someone who is very dear to us. Parents are dealing with a loss of a child

either through a miscarriage or disease. Many of us have lost a parent, brother, sister, friend, co-workers due to death. Pastors of local congregations will have as many as a dozen funerals each year. For many people death can be an unknown, unwanted, uninvited stranger who walks into their life and takes a loved one away. Death is not a stranger to Christ. In Christ, death has a new meaning, new dimension, new character, thanks to Christ's death; death does not have the final word.

“When they saw Job from a distance, they scarcely recognized him. Wailing loudly, they tore their robes and threw dust into the air over their heads to show their grief.”¹³ Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. No one said a word to Job, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words.” Job 2:12-13

Let us pray:

Gracious God, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Help us to know that we do not walk alone, but you walk before us always. Fill our hearts with your love and peace, that we can feel your presence in the mist of our loss. In Jesus Christ's name, we pray. Amen.



Friday, March 3, 2017

Death – a Gift

*There is no point in being a Christian unless we regard death as God's greatest gift.
- Fr. Edward T. Oaks*

Death is a gift, even God's greatest gift... In Christian death, one does not die alone, a Christian dies with Christ. To rise with Christ, we must die with Christ. To be united with Christ, we must be united with him in his death, therefore in our own deaths there is new meaning. Because of Christ's death there is a positive meaning. *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21). *“If we have died with him, we will also live with him”* (2 Timothy 2:11). Death does not have the final word any longer... By the Grace of God and love of our Lord and Savior we are given a new life in Christ, new meaning and new purpose in God's heavenly kingdom. When death comes calling... know that you are not alone, Christ is with you.

Let us pray:

Dear Heavenly Father, you alone are the holy one, you alone are the Lord, and you make all things new. Restore me to new life today, and in the days ahead, even in death. In your Son's name we pray. Amen



Saturday, March 4, 2017

Love, Time and Death

Dear Readers,

Throughout this week, I have taken you on a short journey reflecting on three simple words, words I felt were worth thinking about after watching the movie called *Collateral Beauty*. There is beauty in the world and beauty in our human experience. 1 Corinthians 13:12 says: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but I shall know just as I also am known.”

I believe, through love, time, and death we can grow closer to God. Without the love, we would not love God or love others. Without time, we would not have a sense of season in life and we would be stuck... time keeps moving forward. Without death, there is no life, only existence. Without death, we do not appreciate eternal life. Life is a gift here on earth and in heaven. It is not to be taken for granted. Every day is precious. Live it that way! Praise the Lord!!

Let us pray:

Dear gracious, loving and forgiving God, thank you for all of your wonderful life giving and forgiving gifts: the gift of love, the gift of time, and the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, who died for us all and for our sin, that through death we might be restored to your eternal keeping. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

