

## The Soul Needs a Future – Matthew 10:28, John 3:3

Ecclesiastes 3:11 reads like this:

**11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.**

We could spend the next hour unpacking that verse but I want you to hear these words from God: **“He has set eternity in the human heart.”**

Anthropologists, those people who study peoples and cultures, have noted that every culture throughout all history in every country have some form of religion. And guess what one of the main issues the religion tries to address? The answer to this question, “What happens when this life is done?”

Scripture reminds us of something we know all too well:

15 The life of mortals is like grass,  
they flourish like a flower of the field;  
16 the wind blows over it and it is gone,  
and its place remembers it no more. (Psalm 103:15,16)

Bottom line – life passes by far too quickly, and so the question God has planted in the heart of people is, “Then what happens? When this life is finished, what happens next?”

One of the things that sets humans apart from the rest of God’s creation is the fact we can think about the future. We can think ahead about what things will be like in a day, a year, ten years for now. Of course we seldom have any real clue what lies ahead, but we can dream about tomorrow. Grass cannot do that. Animals do not do that. Trees and mountains do not do that. But people think about tomorrow...

And that can lead us to think about this question, “What does tomorrow look like the day after I die?”

Many years ago I had a financial adviser come to my house to help me plan my financial future. He asked questions to see what my financial goals were.

He asked if I would like to send my children to college or university some day. Yes, I said.

Would I like to pay off my mortgage? Yes, I said.

Would you like to take some trips? Yes, I said.

Would I like to retire some day, and live comfortably? Yes, I said.

He started to scribble numbers on his papers to help me reach my goals, but I was not done. I asked him a question.

“What happens after we retire?” He was stumped for a moment. Then he smiled, as if I was cracking a joke, and he said, “Well, I guess we die.”

I said, “I want to plan for what happens after that.” He looked confused so I went on. “I believe life does not end at death, and I want to plan for that future. I am not sure your investments can help me with that.” Our meeting was soon over...

Jesus confronted his disciples, and all who would listen, with a similar challenge. Jesus was sending his disciples out to share the message that “... the Kingdom of heaven is near.” He gave the disciples authority to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper and cast out demons.

How wonderful! They would be the center of attraction wherever they went. But wait, Jesus goes on to say he sends them like sheep among the wolves, that people would reject them and the message they carry: they would be arrested and persecuted for sharing the message about Jesus. “All men will hate you because of me,” Jesus said, “but stand firm until the end.”

Jesus never expected Christianity to be popular or embraced by governments and nations. He expected true believers would have to pay a price for their faith.

It is in this context that Jesus says to his disciples,

**<sup>28</sup> Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (Mt 10:28).**

If the soul has a future, and longs for a future, what kind of future will it be? Jesus says there is certainly a heaven to gain, but there is also a hell to shun.

This verse tells us who to fear, and who not to fear. It starts with the ones we should not fear. Jesus says, “Do not fear the one who can kill the body.” Now Jesus had just told of arrests and persecution and even being put to death. Jesus’ followers would be crucified, torn apart by wild animals, sawn in half, dipped in oil and lit on fire, hacked to pieces with axes and swords... and Jesus says do not fear the people who do that to you?

Well, he does say flee – run and hide as long as you can, but in the end, once someone has killed you they can do no more to you. In fact, that is what Luke’s version of this saying makes clear. Jesus says there,

**<sup>4</sup> “I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more.” (Luke 12:4)**

What Jesus is getting at is that the soul does have a future, and that future is in God's hands. When our days on earth are completed, when the suffering and pain of this world cannot touch us anymore, we will stand before God to give an account of what we did with our souls. If we have not been good soul keepers in this life, then God will throw us into hell. If we have been good soul keepers in this life, there will be a place for us in heaven.

Does God delight in throwing people into hell? Hardly. Scripture says that God desires that NONE should perish but ALL come to repentance.

It goes on in Matthew 10 to tell us that God cares for the birds that are sold for mere pennies at the market: will he not care for us? He even takes the time to count every hair on our heads, because he cares for us. Jesus says, "God loves people far more than anything else he created, and more than anything else he wants to see us with him for eternity in heaven."

But if we squander this life, if we ignore God and live a life that does not show fear – or reverence – for God, we will be cast in the lake of fire – hell. Fear God now and be saved. Ignore or scorn God now and be lost forever.

Can you hear what Jesus is saying to us today? You have a soul, or better, you are a soul. God breathed life into you and you will not live just 70, 80 or 90 plus years, but for eternity. There is a future beyond this life. Your body will fail you but when it breathes its last breath, it is not the end.

Eternity spreads out before us...

And Jesus says, care for your soul today, so you will be ready for tomorrow. It is true that life passes by all too quickly, but what happens in this life is not all there is to our existence. In fact, this life is so brief compared to eternity some have called it simply the school for our real life.

One day a scholar came to Jesus. He was a Pharisee, a man who committed his life to seeking God through keeping rules, trying to be good enough so that God would accept him. The problem with a religion that is based on how much good you do is that you never know if or when you have done enough to gain God's approval. There was no way of knowing if you would go to heaven or hell, because there was no way of knowing if you have done enough good deeds. At best, when asked if you thought you would go to heaven, you could say, "I hope so..."

The Pharisee's name was Nicodemus, and he wanted to know what Jesus had to say about soul care. How much good should he do to gain God's favour?

Jesus knew this man was on the wrong path. Jesus loved him too much to see him continue to wander down that path, so Jesus cut right to the chase and said to Nicodemus,

**I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”  
(Jn 3:3)**

What did Jesus mean? Nicodemus did not get it at first. He wondered how a person could enter the womb of his or her mother to be born again. So Jesus goes on to explain.

**“I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. (Jn 3:5)**

The only way for the soul to be ready for eternity is if it has a second birth. The first birth is when you entered the world from your mother’s womb. But there must be a spiritual birth, a time when God breathes His life into you through the Holy Spirit. Only God can grant you the life that will prepare you for a glorious eternity, and that life comes by putting our faith in Jesus Christ.

A preacher was holding meetings in St. Louis. A man came to him and said, “I am the most ungodly man in the whole city.” “Praise God!” said the preacher. “Why? Because I am so bad?” “No, but I am glad to meet a man who recognizes that he is a sinner!”

The man went on. “I have been coming for three weeks, waiting for you to tell me what to do.” The preacher said, “Let’s look at what the Bible says.” The preacher read Romans 4:5 to the man: **““To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly—”**

“I am the ungodly,” said the man, “so what must I do?” “The verse tells you,” said the preacher. “Work not. You do nothing but believe. The work is completed by Jesus when he went to the cross of Calvary. You have confessed you are a sinner; now receive the gift of life.” The man went home and next time the preacher saw him he was glowing with joy. He had received the gift of forgiveness and life by faith. He was born again.

It is in the conversation with Nicodemus, when Jesus says he must be born again, that Jesus would also say those most quoted of all words in the Bible that tell how to be born again. Jesus said to Nicodemus:

**“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)**

The soul must have a future, something to look forward to that outlives even this life. God has set eternity in our hearts, but an eternity without God is hell. To have an eternity with God we must put our faith in Jesus. Jesus gave his life to secure your future – to be sure you had a future in heaven.

But that future is not yours until you confess your sin, ask God’s forgiveness and accept by faith the new life Jesus offers you. Have you done that? Are you living for today, or for eternity? Are you living to serve yourself or God?

Today could be the day you are born again, the day God breathes his life into you through the Holy Spirit. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Stop trying to be good enough and receive by faith the gift of life.

I am going to pray, and if you want to be born again today, pray this prayer with me.

**Dear Jesus, I want to live forever with you in heaven. I confess I am a sinner – I have failed you in so many ways. Please forgive me. Please cleanse me of my sin and give me a fresh new start in life today. I believe Jesus died so I can live, so I receive the gift of forgiveness today. Thank you that through Jesus I have eternal life with you in heaven. Help me live each day by faith and obedience to you. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.**

If you prayed that prayer send me a message so I can send you a message of encouragement, and so I can rejoice with you in what just happened. Today, reach out to Jesus – he is reaching out to you.