

Graphics, Audio and Video - Media Notes are highlighted with this background color

- There are several scriptures at the beginning and one at the end of the sermon.
- During the welcome, I will introduce the next worship series. There is a still slide and a video
 - Still slide - I will talk about the series first and then invite the video to be played.
 - Video - After the video is complete, I will continue with the service
- Joys and Concerns - There is a picture of the Baxter Springs Mission Team to show

Key Questions, Metadata and Outline

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about how we can make the most of our life by following Jesus.

Why is this sermon important?

This sermon is important because no matter where we are in our life we can make the most of the rest of it by following Jesus.

What is the context of this sermon?

This sermon is part of a three week series at the end of summer. It is adapted from The Alpha Course Talk 15: How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of my Life?

What are the next action steps?

The next action steps are to follow Jesus.

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that God is the God of the second chance, and the third chance, and the hundredth chance.

Metadata

- Topic(s)
 - Faith
- Sermon Books of the Bible
 - 1 Timothy, Romans
- Series
 - Following Jesus
- Speaker
 - Andrew Conard
- Tags
 - faith, why, Jesus, new life, life, real life, different, new

9th Sunday after Pentecost
Following Jesus: Making the Most of Life
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text online at <http://j.mp/1AjJhtx>

August 10, 2014
1 Timothy 6:11-21
Target Word Count: 2,345
Video online at [Insert Link Here]

Outline

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1 Timothy 6:11-21, CEB

11 But as for you, man of God, run away from all these things. Instead, pursue righteousness, holy living, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness. 12 Compete in the good fight of faith. Grab hold of eternal life—you were called to it, and you made a good confession of it in the presence of many witnesses. 13 I command you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and Christ Jesus, who made the good confession when testifying before Pontius Pilate. 14 Obey this order without fault or failure until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 The timing of this appearance is revealed by God alone, who is the blessed and only master, the King of kings and Lord of lords. 16 He alone has immortality and lives in light that no one can come near. No human being has ever seen or is able to see him. Honor and eternal power belong to him. Amen.

17 Tell people who are rich at this time not to become egotistical and not to place their hope on their finances, which are uncertain. Instead, they need to hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment. 18 Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others. 19 When they do these things, they will save a treasure for themselves that is a good foundation for the future. That way they can take hold of what is truly life.

20 Timothy, protect what has been given to you in trust. Avoid godless and pointless discussions and the contradictory claims of so-called “knowledge.” 21 When some people adopted this false knowledge, they missed the goal of faith.

May grace be with you all.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Introduction

Series Review

As we close this three week series, we will examine some of the essentials of following Jesus. The sermon today addresses some of the very basic questions about following Jesus. I hope you will listen for something new, to be reminded of something you already know or take notes on how to talk about your faith with a friend or family member who does not believe.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

Opening Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Only One Life

We only get one life. We might wish for two. D.H. Lawrence said this: 'If only we could have two lives—the first one in which to make our mistakes, and the second one in which to profit from those mistakes.' But there are no dress rehearsals for life—we're on stage right away.

Making the Most of Life

And the question is: how can we make the most of the rest of our lives? All of us, or certainly I, have made many mistakes in my life. And the question is: what about the future? How can we make the most of that? We see this in the encouragement from Paul to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:18-19:

Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others. When they do these things, they will save a treasure for themselves that is a good foundation for the future. That way they can take hold of what is truly life.

Transition

How do we take hold of what is truly life?

What Should We Do?

Break with the Past

First of all, what should we do? We find one answer in Paul's letter to the Romans - Break with the past. We're called to be different. From Romans 12:2:

Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of

your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world. By the 'world' here Paul means the world that has shut God out. J.B. Phillips translates this: 'Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold.' Now, that's not easy, because there's always pressure to conform.

Here, if we're honest, on a Sunday morning like this all the pressure is to be Christian. But the moment you get back to work on Monday morning, all the pressure is the other way. And it's hard to be different.

Police Officer Exam

I heard about a young police officer who was taking his final exam at Hendon Police College in North London. And the first three questions in this exam were relatively easy. And then he got to question four. Question four went like this:

'You're on patrol in outer London when an explosion occurs in a gas main in a nearby street. On investigation, you find that a large hole has been blown in the footpath and that there is an overturned van lying nearby. Inside the van there's a strong smell of alcohol. Both occupants, a man and a woman, are injured. You recognise the woman as the wife of your Divisional Inspector, who is at present away in the United States.

A passing motorist stops to offer you assistance, but you realise that he is a man who's wanted for armed robbery. Suddenly another man runs out of a nearby house shouting that his wife is expecting a baby and the shock of the explosion has made the birth imminent.

Another man is crying for help, having been blown into an adjacent canal by the explosion, and he cannot swim. Bearing in mind the provisions of the Mental Health Act, describe in a few words what actions you would take.'

The police officer thought for a moment, picked up his pen and wrote:

'I would take off my uniform and mingle with the crowd.'

That's always the temptation—to take off our Christian uniform and mingle with the crowd, to be like everybody else, because it's so much easier. But what we're called to be is distinctive—to retain our Christian identity wherever we are, whatever the circumstance.

Chrysalis and a Chameleon

It's the difference, if you like, between a chrysalis and a chameleon. A chrysalis is a pupa that turns into a beautiful butterfly. A chameleon is a long-tailed lizard that changes color according to the background it's on. And that's the temptation that we face: to be one thing, to be Christian if the environment is Christian; but if the environment is different, just to fit in with the background.

And that always creates a tension in our lives, because we're one thing in one situation and we're another thing in another situation. Apparently they did an experiment with a chameleon one time. To see how it would respond to tension, they put it on a piece of tartan, and apparently it exploded!

Now, we're called not to fit in with the background but to be different. Being different does not mean being odd. We're not called to speak in some kind of weird religious language or to wear weird clothes; we're called actually to be normal. That's what a relationship with God brings.

Ways We are Called to Be Different

Backbiting / Namecalling

Let me share a few examples where we are called to be different. First of all, the area of backbiting, character assassination behind people's back. This is a very common thing, isn't it. Somebody goes out of the room and all the conversation turns to that person, and we're called to be different—maybe to try and think of something positive to say about that person. It may not be easy, but... maybe they're nice to their cat!

Personal Example

The pressure to conform is huge.

Pressure to Conform

A team of doctors conducted an experiment to see the ways in which group pressure influence young people. And what they did was they got three cards, each with a different length of line on it: one was an obviously long line, one was a medium-sized line, and one was an obviously short line.

And what they did was they got ten young people together. Nine of those young people had been secretly instructed to vote for the second-longest line, the medium-sized line, as being longer than the long line. And there was one student who didn't have a clue what was going on. And that was the person they were conducting the experiment on.

So what happened was the people conducting the experiment held up... They said, 'We want you to vote for the longest line.' They held up the medium-sized line, and the nine students who'd been instructed all raised their hands and voted for that as being the longest line. The tenth student looked round in just total disbelief! And he admitted this is what he thought: 'I can't have been listening to the instructions. I must have missed the point. I'd better do what all the rest are doing, or they will laugh at me.' So he carefully raised his hand together with the other nine.

So the directions were explained again. They said, 'We want you to vote for the longest line.' And again they held up the medium-sized line—nine hands went up. This time the guy just looked around, completely—just couldn't believe what was happening! And yet again he put up his hand.

Over and over again he voted with the group. 75 percent of young people tested behaved in the same way. They sat there time after time, saying that a medium-sized line was longer than

a long line. Only 25 percent had the courage to stand against the group.

It takes courage not to conform to the world around us, even if what we're doing we know deep in our hearts is right.

Never Too Late

And the wonderful news is: it's never too late. This is all about God's love for us, and God's redemption in Christ. That's why Jesus died for us—so that the past can be forgiven, so that the past can be wiped clean, so that the scars, if there are scars, can be healed. Jesus wants to restore wholeness to our lives and to give us a new start. But St. Paul does not write this to condemn people. He doesn't say, 'You terrible people!' He was writing this probably to a group of people whose past lives were... The ancient world was a very immoral world, and their past lives were probably far from ideal. So he's not writing to condemn them; he says: Don't conform any longer to the pattern of this world.

We're called to change the world rather than to be squeezed into the world. Now, I'm conscious that all this is very kind of counter-cultural, because the world around us is not like that anymore. The standards of the world around us are very, very different. And it takes a great deal of courage to take a stand and live out these standards today.

Transition

So that's the first thing: break with the past. Secondly, make a new start—be transformed.

Make a New Start - Be Transformed

But if you're anything like me, I have a bit of a fear of change, because I like routine—I get used to my life as it is, and even when I see—sometimes I see somebody so radiant with the love of Christ and I think, 'I'd love to be like that!' But then I think, 'I wonder what that would mean in my life to become like that.'

Treasures of a New Life

We see a glimpse of the treasures that God promises through the Bible:

Love, joy, peace patience, faithfulness, generosity, hospitality, blessing, rejoicing, harmony, humility, peace, where good is not overcome by evil, but evil is overcome by good.

These are some of the treasures which God has in store for us. But in order to receive that, we have to leave behind the rubbish. Break with the past—make a new start.

How do We Do This?

Offer All of Ourselves

How do we do this? In Romans 12:1, Paul writes, I encourage you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice. This is an act of the will—to offer all of ourselves to God, all of our lives.

Time

That means giving God our time. Our time is our most valuable possession. Giving God all of our time doesn't mean we spend all of our time reading the Bible and praying—of course our jobs are also our vocation. It's a very important part of our Christian calling—our work, and everything else that we're involved in.

But one of the things, I think, that happens is when we say to the Lord, 'Lord, you can have everything. You can have all of my time,' is that our priorities change. It's easy to get our priorities a little bit wrong.

Possessions and Things

I came across something that... This was a genuine advertisement in the personal columns of a newspaper in Africa. It was a farmer who was looking for a potential wife. And this is how he advertised. He was from Nanyuki. It said this: 'Nanyuki farmer seeks lady with tractor, with view to companionship and possible marriage. Please send picture of tractor.'

Money

Our money—we give to the Lord our money. There's no ban on private property or making money or saving it or enjoying the good things in life, but what is wrong is the selfish accumulation for ourselves, an unhealthy obsession with money, putting our trust in riches. And that just brings perpetual insecurity and leads us away from God. And the way to break that kind of thing is genuine giving, generous giving—which is the appropriate response to God's generosity and is the way to break materialism in our lives.

Ears

We give to God our ears—what we listen to. Do we listen to gossip or do we listen to what will build us up?

Eyes

Our eyes—do we look with jealousy or lust, or do we look at people through God's eyes: 'How can I bring God's blessing to that person?'

Mouths

Our mouths. James, chapter 3 talks about the mouth being such a powerful instrument. He says: 'with your tongue you can destroy someone.' How many people can look back to something that was said to them, maybe at school or by a parent or by somebody, that cut them and maybe has had a negative influence on their whole life. On the other hand, think what encouraging words do.

Hands

Our hands—do we use them to take or to serve? St. Paul says present your bodies. And you know what? This is the extraordinary paradox: if we live for ourselves, we find ourselves in bondage, in slavery. But if we present everything to God, we find freedom.

Living Sacrifices

So he says present your bodies as living sacrifices. Sacrifice means that there will be a cost. William Berkeley wrote: 'Jesus came not to make life easy but to make people great.' If you want an easy life, if you want a life of ease, please don't become a Christian. Because it's not easy being a Christian. But if you want a great life, a fulfilling life, life at all its best, life at its best, then follow Jesus.

We may have to give up stuff that we quite like and we'd like to hold onto. Actually, long term it's only rubbish that God asks us to give up. But sometimes giving up the rubbish is hard. And to some extent it's a lifelong struggle, giving up the rubbish. Some of it we put away immediately, but sometimes we struggle in our lives just to get rid of it. But we need to do that.

Why Should We Do It?

Why should we do it? Because we have the chance to take hold of what is truly life.

Getting Into A Mess

I heard a story about a parent whose son came home from school one time, and he'd been asked to make this poster for a Roman slave-market. And he spent all weekend on it, he really worked hard on it, and it was beautiful what he produced. He got a lovely italic pen and he wrote on it, and he produced this wonderful poster for this Roman slave-market.

And then he said at the end of the weekend, on Sunday afternoon, he said, 'Now, what we've been told is we need to make this look like a parchment. And the way to do that is to hold it over a very low gas flame. You just burn these holes and it makes brown marks and it makes it look like a parchment.'

So his mom said, 'Oh, that's great. Let's do it together—I'll help you.' He said, 'No, no, no, I'd like to do it on my own.' She said, 'Well, it's quite difficult: you know, fire and paper... It might be a good idea if we did it together.' He said, 'No, no, no, I want to do it on my own!'

Well, there was about that much left of it, and lots of tears. But the good news is there was time to do it again. And this time he said, 'Mom, would you give me a hand with this?'

And you may feel that about your life: 'I've made a bit of a mess. There's this much left.'

Good News

The good news is that God is the God of the second chance, and the third chance, and

the hundredth chance. And we can start all over again, and this time we can say to the Lord: 'Lord, for the rest of my life could we do it together?'

So we do it because of what God has planned for our future, and secondly because of what God has done for us through his amazing love.

And the little sacrifices that we may have to make for him are nothing compared to the sacrifice that Jesus made for us, that God made for us in Christ on the Cross. And when we look at the Cross, we see how much God loves us. And if God was willing to do that for us, it's absurd not to trust him with all the other things in our lives.

St. Paul wrote this in **Romans 8:32**

"He didn't spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. Won't he also freely give us all things with him?"

Auction

I heard about a very wealthy man called Fitzgerald. This man had one son. And his son left home and, while he was away from home, he died. And this wealthy man never got over the loss of his son. And as his wealth increased, he invested in old masters— valuable paintings.

When he died, his will called for all the paintings to be sold. And because he had such a great collection collectors, museums came from all over the world and a crowd gathered.

On the day of the auction the lawyer read from his will, and what it said was this:

'The first painting to be sold in this auction is Of My Beloved Son.' It was by an unknown painter, it was poor quality. The only person who even bothered to bid for it was somebody who'd worked for the family and who'd known the boy and had loved him, and he bought it for sentimental value and for the memories it held.

Then the lawyer read the second clause of the will: 'Whoever has My Son gets everything. The auction is over.'

Paul wrote: "He didn't spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. Won't he also freely give us all things with him?"

'Whoever has my Son gets everything.'

Prayer