

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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Live With Wisdom

by Dan Trygg

“As for the days of our life, they contain 70 years, or if due to strength, 80 years, yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away...¹² So, teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:10,12

“Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.” 1 John 2:15-17

“...For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth.” John 18:37

“...since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,² so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.³ For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having lived in sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.⁴ And in this, they are surprised when you do not run with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they malign you;⁵ but they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.” 1 Peter 4:1-5

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls.” Proverbs 11:30

It is not often that New Year's Day falls on a Sunday. I did some checking, and there was only one other time in the past 15 years this took place. That was in 2006. The title for that message was “Hidden Treasure”. That was about how **often we don't recognize what God has placed right in our midst**. Just as the people of Bethlehem did not perceive that the Baby born in their midst was the long-awaited Messiah (Mic. 5:2), ...or as the people of Nazareth did not discern that the very *netser*, the Messianic sprout from David's roots (Isa. 11:1) was growing up in *their* village..., in a similar way **we do not grasp the incredible potential He has put within our own inner beings, ...nor do we fathom who we are, what we are here for, and what He is doing all around us**. We either don't know, or we disregard, what the Bible says God has come to do in our lives. We are so busy trying to “fit in” with people, or to “get what others have”, or to “relax and chill out”, that we don't ask the deeper questions of “Why am I here?” or “What does God want to do in my life?” **If you are a Christian, do you know that the Spirit of Christ is in you?** Do you know that you *are* a child of God, no matter what you *feel*? **Do you know that God has appointed you to be a world changer, ...at least to change your little corner of the world?** Do you think of yourself that way? Have you taken ownership of that calling? **What are you changing to change to become a world-changer?** If nothing changes, nothing changes. **What are you doing different to become different to make a difference?** As Henry Blackaby observed in *Experiencing God*, “**You can't follow God, and stay where you are.**” What about you? **Are you “staying where you are, and have been”, or are you purposing to pursue God and His plan for your life?** Is there an action plan for this new year?

In Psalm 90, we have an appeal by Moses for living wisely. He acknowledges the transitoriness of our lives. God is everlasting, but **we are here only a short time**. **All the efforts of our hands, the things we took pride in and worked so hard to obtain, are in reality just so much labor and sorrow. They do not last.** They soon wear out and are gone, and we ourselves, too, fly away. **The main point of the psalm is to have a lasting impact.** In verse 12, Moses asks God to teach us to “number our days that we might present to You a heart of wisdom”. What does that mean? **Moses wants us to recognize that life is fleeting and short, and live in such a way as to not waste the time we have. He wants us to use it well.** Note that we are to present *to God* a heart of wisdom. **We are accountable to God for what we do in this life.**

The unbelieving world recognizes the transitory nature of life, but, since they don't recognize God as Creator and Judge, **their response often is, “Well, we'd better grab all the gusto life offers, while we can.”** They **live to get**, to accumulate and experience all the pleasurable things they can. **Moses is saying that this is foolish and wasteful. There is more to life than that short-sighted approach. A wise approach finds satisfaction in God's love, ...joy and contentment in relationship with Him.** Moses asks to be able to see what God is doing. He prays that God would reveal His glory to our children, and **he asks that God establish the work of our hands. That means that the fruit of our efforts would be productive, ongoing and permanent.** Instead of living to get, ...to experience and consume for our *own* pride and pleasure..., **we choose to live to please and honor God, to invest in His work, kingdom and people.** He is still the one who created all things to be enjoyed, and there is blessing and bounty with Him, but our priorities are different. He comes first. He gets the praise. **We use what He gives us as He directs. We do not spend it all on ourselves. We find our hearts drawn to love others and help them. It is more blessed to give than receive** (Acts 20:35).

This squares with the passage from I John. **John the apostle also tells us that this world is passing away, and its lusts with it. To live for fleshly lusts, or to obtain beautiful things, or even to seek a ground for boasting**

is foolishness, because *all of these things will soon be gone!* By contrast, the apostle John declared, “*the one who does the will of God abides forever.*” John also had recorded Jesus’ words to His disciples that express a similar thought, “I chose you, and appointed you in order that you might go and bear fruit, and that *your fruit might remain*” (Jn. 15:16). **Not only will we abide forever, but if we give ourselves to do God’s will, the fruit of our lives will endure and continue.**

C. T. Studd, a famous Cambridge athlete who gave up fame and a lucrative career in sports to serve Christ as a missionary wrote, “**Only one life, soon it will pass; only what’s done for Christ will last.**” Studd made a definitive choice to invest in the work of God, rather than his own self-comfort. As a result, he went on to pioneer a mission work that has literally saved and transformed thousands, and continues operating today, some 100 years later. How did this happen? It was a journey that took many steps. Studd invested in his relationship with Christ. **He made the changes necessary to change to become the world-changer God called him to be.** It began with reading the Bible, praying, and going to church and Bible studies. He was made of the same stuff we are. He reported that after six years as a Christian, he realized he was in “an unhappy, backslidden state”. *What he was doing was not enough. He realized that he had to get more serious about his faith, or he was going to be a fruitless, unproductive Christian.* **He did different things to become different to make a difference in the world of his day.** He got involved in ministry opportunities. He spoke up for Christ, first to family and friends, and later to others. He purposed to give more spontaneously and generously. He chose to respond to service opportunities when they presented themselves. Sometimes others thought he went too far, but he pushed their criticisms aside, and **he gave himself freely to serve people and to share Christ. He found radical joy came with radical living.** Eventually, God led him to work with several other missionary organizations, in China, India and Africa, before forming the Heart of Africa Mission.

Do you ever wonder why you are here? Jesus knew specifically why He was here, and He put it quite succinctly, “For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth” (Jn. 18:37). I don’t think it is any different for any of the rest of us. **We are all placed where we are to be able to testify to the truth.** “Testify” doesn’t mean that we have to be a public speaker, or a brilliant debater. What it means is that we can say, “Yes, I believe Jesus is the Savior of the world and Lord of all. I can tell you that faith in Him has changed my life for the better.” **We can tell our own story, relate our own experiences. We can all do that. What does Jesus mean to you?**

Jesus tells us that He has chosen and appointed us to bear lasting fruit (Jn. 15:16). The word translated as “appointed” in this verse actually means “placed”. **God has hand selected us and put us in our geographical and situational settings to testify to the truth and to bear lasting fruit.** *We are already in relationship with other people who we rub shoulders with, or spend time with, who can see who we are and can hear what we might have to say about Jesus. These are the primary ones to whom we will have the opportunity to reveal Jesus by our actions. If we are going to have a credible, meaningful testimony, there must be something about us that is different than other people.* Whether we came to know Christ early in life, or later, **knowing and following Jesus should make a difference in our lives, otherwise what do we have to offer people?**

This is the principle Peter was commenting on in the passage from his first letter, cited above. **People should be surprised by the change in our lives. They should see that we are different than they are,** or at least different than the surrounding unbelieving culture. **Again, he says those who do not know God are living to satisfy human sensual lusts and desires. Those who know and follow Jesus live to serve the will of God.** Spiritually-minded believers recognize the emptiness of living only for sensuality and drunkenness. Instead, they give thanks to God for the blessings they receive. They celebrate *Him*, and *love to serve others* in His name. **Unbelievers do not understand this perspective, and often will judge the believers as being arrogant or “holier-than-thou”, when, in reality, that is the furthest thing from their minds.** Those who truly know Jesus generally have compassion, not judgment or arrogance toward others. They, too, were once lost and blind to the things of God. **They know that it was the grace and kindness of God through people that reached into their world and drew them to some kind of love and acceptance they had never known before. Who are we to judge those who do not know God? They will face Him soon enough, and then it will be too late. God has placed us in their lives to be a light in their darkness, and to draw them to Jesus. Once they come, they will be transformed. He will change them from the inside out, just as He is changing us.** They will have to choose to respond to Him by *changing things to change their lives* to become *world-changers* in their network of relationships. **There is a partnership here, God working in us to give us new desires and abilities, and our working out or expressing those inner motivations in outward change.**

Peter was a fisherman before he met Jesus. Yet, when Jesus called him to leave the nets, He said, “**Follow Me and I will make you a fisher of men**” (Matt. 4:19). In order catch fish, at least with a line, you have to present them with something attractive. **It is the love and goodness of Jesus seen in us that will draw people.** He who is wise will win souls. **Winning souls is the fruit that really remains. Are you willing to invest toward that end in 2012?**