

Sermon Series: TRANSFORMATION

Sermon: What Matters Most

Text: 1 Corinthians 13

Discussion Questions:

What if you were told right now that you had an hour left to live.

- What would you do?
- What would you say?
- How passionate would you be about what you said?
- How does this little exercise illustrate what matters most to you?
- How many times would you use the word “love” in that hour?
- Why is it that people oftentimes fail to say or do in thirty years what they would say or do in that one hour?

Examination:

Read **Luke 16:19-31**. This little story that Jesus told actually takes the opening discussion question a step further. It addresses the question: What if - in the moments after your death - you were given the opportunity to return to the earth to share a message with those who are still living?

- What message would the rich man deliver to his brothers?
- Do you think, while the rich man was alive, that he gave any thought to where he might spend eternity? Why or why not?
- Do you think Lazarus (the poor man), while he was alive, gave any thought to his eternity? Why or why not?
- What do you know about Hades? Is this the same place as Hell?
- Do you think Jesus is just making up a total hypothetical situation when referring to the conditions in Hades - or do you think He might be giving some clues as to what things are truly like in the afterlife (ie: torment, suffering, flames, etc.)?
- Again...do you think Jesus is speaking hypothetically, or do you believe there truly is a “great gulf” that separates “Abrahams presence” from “Hades” the moment after we die?
- Do you think that the rich man’s brothers would have believed him - and repented - if he actually did come back from the dead and tell them about how terrible Hades is?
- Let’s face it - any message about Hell, or Hades, or judgment, or eternal suffering just isn’t very PC these days. Would you agree with our prevailing culture that messages like this are better off left un-preached?
- If it’s really true that the MOMENT we die, our eternal fate is sealed, and that Hades is a place of torment - don’t you think that that message qualifies as “something that matters most”? Doesn’t this reality make the GOSPEL truly GOOD NEWS?
- Have you found any ways to share the Gospel with someone in a way that they’ve been open to hearing it?

Read **Matthew 25:31-46**. Re-read verses 41 & 46.

- This, again, is another story (or parable) of Jesus. There are many Bible scholars who think this is allegory. What do you think? Do you think Jesus is describing actual fire? And not just fire - but eternal fire? If there's even a chance that Jesus could be describing actual eternal fire here - isn't this something we OUGHT TO PAY ATTENTION TO???
- Who was this eternal fire prepared for? Why? Why might people go there?
- Some of the most haunting words in all of this are the words: "*Depart from me.*" The Bible is clear that ANYONE has access to God right now (even Satan according to the Book of Job). But these words seem final - "*Depart from me.*" Might it be that the very worst part of this eternal punishment is the fact that there will be no more access whatsoever to God?
- What do you think eternal life looks like - is like - will be like?

Now read **1 Corinthians 9:19-27**.

- Paul refers here (v. 25) to a "*crown that will last forever.*" What do you think he means by this? Is this an actual crown? If it's not actual headwear - what might it be?
- Paul talks about gaining a crown that will last forever. Do you think he is talking literally about forever? How long is forever? If forever is really forever - isn't this something we OUGHT TO PAY ATTENTION TO???
- Paul also talks about being disqualified for the prize (v. 27). What do you think he means by this? Do you think that, in the same way the crown will last forever, this state of disqualification will last forever? Do you think this disqualification has any connection to the Hades that Jesus mentions in His story in Luke 16?
- Does Paul seem to have a measure of concern that he himself might not qualify for the eternal crown that he mentions? Does he use this concern (fear?) as motivation? What kind of "training" do you think he is describing?
- Much like the rich man who was interested in going back to his brothers to warn them about Hades, Paul indicates that he is willing to go to ANY length (vv. 19-22) to share the Gospel and "save some." Save them from what? Why is he so motivated? Is this something we might do well to think about a little more - in terms of focusing on what matters most?

Application:

Give some serious thought and prayer to sharing the Gospel with an unsaved person this week. If you're not yet comfortable speaking it - how about putting it in a note? Ask God to open a door for you to make your faith public. Keep in mind that God can use your feeble words or intentional witness in a way that goes beyond what you might think or even imagine.

Someone along the way has shared Christ with you. Be that person to someone else this week.