

One Month to Live
A Turning Point
James 4:13-17
2/21/16

- Maybe you heard the story about the man who was very, very ill. He and his wife went to see the doctor. The doctor did a series of tests and then spoke to the wife alone.
 - o The doctor told her, “Your husband has a very serious disease, but it is treatable. In order for the treatment to work, you’ll have to really take care of him. Cook him 3 meals a day; prepare them just as he likes them; give him every physical desire he asks for every day for the next 6 months and he’ll be just fine.”
 - o The wife left the doctor’s office to her waiting husband. Her husband, nervously asks, “So, what did the doctor say? The wife replied, “He says you’re not going to make it.”

- That’s a pretty old joke, but a good one. And, a funny way to introduce what we are going to talk about for the next month leading up to Easter. We are going to be talking about death, but more importantly, we are going to be talking about how to really live before we actually die.
 - o The truth is, we all have only two options: death or Jesus returns in our lifetime.
 - o I’m scheduled to die on Monday, July 13th, 2054. I will be 85 years old. I found this out online at deathclock.com. You can find out your death date as well. You just tell them your DOB, height, BMI, and general outlook on life like if you have a normal outlook, or pessimistic or optimistic, etc...Then they calculate it all up and pop out your death date all within about two seconds. What the doctor can’t tell you, deathclock.com can tell you quick and easy!

- Of course, the truth is I could live longer, (although 85 seems to be a good long life to me,) or much shorter. Any plethora of things could happen = a car crash, heart attack, cancer, airplane accident...
 - o Those are all sobering thoughts, right? If we dwell of those kinds of thoughts, it might keep us from doing anything, which even then you wouldn’t be safe since most accidents happen at home.
 - o And while this series is called “One Month to Life” it isn’t meant to be sobering in that it is depressing. Instead, it is my hope that it frees us to live life to its fullest!

- See, I don't think most of us think about living life to its fullest. Or, we might think we are, but we have a wrong understanding of what a full life looks like. I think we get so stuck in the stuff right in front of our faces that it prevents us from really living because a lot of the stuff in front of our faces is, in reality, worthless or meaningless or things that just keep us busy running here and there and doing this and that with little results, let alone any eternal results.
 - o I don't think we live like eternity could come at any moment. Scripture tells us to keep our eyes on the prize, to remember that we are not of this world, to have a heavenly, kingdom of God mindset and outlook. But, do we? Do you?
 - o I doubt that you do. I doubt that you think about the end of your life very often because, like me, you get consumed with the "what is happening right now" and "what do I need to do right now to get through."
 - o But, when our focus is on the grind of and what is in front of us, we miss out on living life to the full.

- See, living life to the full is all about having the right mindset and the right focus. It is about having a focus that is more than right in front of us. It is having a focus that is eternal and realizing that eternal moments with eternal consequences and rewards are right now, if we are looking for them.
 - o You know that I try to be very transparent with you all. My prayer is that we all might be transparent and real with one another. Here is a transparent, honest moment I want to share about me: Some days, ok many days, I really, really look forward to bedtime. Not my bedtime, but boys' bedtime.
 - o As a mom, there are days when I'm so exhausted from the mind-taxing day of ministry to then go home and have two very rambunctious all-boy kind of boys running and yelling and arguing, that about 10 minutes after picking them up from school and daycare, I'm counting down the minutes until bedtime.
 - o Isn't that bad? It is! I prayed for these precious children. I would lay down my life for them. But many times, I just want them to lay down, shut up and go to sleep so I can have some PEACE!

- And, do you know what happens when I'm counting down the minutes until bedtime? I fail to be present in the minutes that could be spent investing in them and instead those minutes are often me getting frustrated with them.
 - o After all, when God miraculously gave us those children, and those who know our story, know that they are only here by the miraculous touch of God, when he gave us those boys, our greatest purpose in life became to disciple those boys, to lead them to Jesus, to teach them how to be men of God.
 - o I've probably missed moments when I could have done just that but because I'm counting down minutes because I don't have the right mindset and I'm focusing on the wrong things.

- The problem is that many of us spend every day just counting down the minutes to some time that we are looking forward to, whether it's a vacation or an upcoming event or bedtime or whatever it might be. Until that anticipated thing or event comes, we just put our heads down and get through the days.
 - o And like me counting down to bedtime, living every day counting down to some event or thing that you are looking forward to keeps you from being present now.

- And, living like that certainty keeps you from looking forward to eternity or from having an eternal mindset. Looking forward to eternity would change everything about our lives, our outlook and how we spend each day.
 - o Having an eternal mindset, with your eyes set on eternity would actually open your eyes to be present now. It would actually open your eyes to experience life now and full life now.
 - o How can that be true? Well, that leads us to the question we are going to ask ourselves over and over during this series.

- **How would your life be different if you knew today you had only one month to live?** That could be a life-changing question. Asking ourselves that question consistently could change how we live, right? How would your life be different?
 - o I'll tell you this – I wouldn't be counting down the hours and minutes to bedtime anymore. I would be savoring every second with my boys. I would be present. I would be intentional.
 - o What about you? Would you just be getting through each day looking forward to some fun spot in the distance?

- Asking ourselves that question would also most definitely give us an eternal mindset. We would be much more aware and mindful that our eternity is coming. It would be a focus that would change the way we live for God.
 - o This need for an eternal mindset in living life is probably what prompted David to write these words in *Psalms 39:4-5* "Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered—how fleeting my life is. You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath."
 - o This is our theme verse for these series. We need to be reminded that life is brief. Your life and my life could end at a moment's notice. We can't waste it counting down the minutes to something temporary when there is an eternal purpose for us here.

- Do you know who knew that better than anyone? Jesus. His mind was set on his eternal purpose and because of that, he lived every day in the present and every day to its fullest. During this series, we are going to look at Jesus' last month and final days to live and what he did during that time so that we can see what we need

to do with the time we have left – whether it's one month or one year or 10 years or 50 more years.

- Sometimes we know that the end of our lives are near. Most often, we do not. The reality is, though, that death most certainly is coming.
 - Jesus knew his time. There was a turning point in his ministry when he knew his end was near. I'm not sure when he knew all of details or the exact timing. Scholars have debated for years if Jesus knew this information when he started his ministry or later or earlier.
- What we can know is that Jesus knew his end purpose because he was in constant communication with his Father. Jesus' purpose was to die and rise again so that we might have life. And, he was able to live out this purpose and know what to do because he spent time with his Father.
- He was always getting away from the crowds, his disciples and all the clamor of people wanting to hear from him, wanting something from him. He would withdraw and go to the Father.
 - It was during those times that God the Father would tell his Son what step to take next, to encourage Jesus through all of it, to empower him to carry out his ministry and to prompt him toward his ultimate purpose.
- It was probably during one of those times with his Father that God told his Son, "It's time now to fulfill your purpose."
- We see this turning point in Matthew 16:21 which says, "From then on Jesus^u began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead."
 - Later, as they were on their way to Jerusalem, Jesus reminds his disciples again, preparing them for what is to come in Matthew 20:17-19 by saying the same thing he did in Matthew 16. He was preparing them not only for his turning point, but for theirs as well. As Christ followers, everything was going to change for the disciples when Jesus fulfilled his purpose.
- And, if we are followers of Christ, like the disciples, we must come to Our Turning Point if we are to fulfill our eternal purpose and the live with an eternal mindset.
- See, Our end purpose is the same as Jesus': to die to ourselves and live. That's why after reminding his disciples that he was going to die, he tells them that they must come to the turning point where they will do the same.
 - Matthew 16:24-26 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. ²⁵If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. ²⁶And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?"

- That is the turning point in our life perspective that makes the switch from a temporary, earthly perspective to an eternal perspective and mindset. That is turning point that helps us really answer the question and live a life that is lived to the full – like we would live if we knew we had a month left to live.
 - o Until you make that turning point and take up your cross to die to yourself and your own desires so that you might live for Christ, you will always feel unfulfilled. Your life will always be lacking something.

- But, if you have made the turning point from self-focus to Jesus-focus, then you will be on the journey of learning how to live life to its fullest as Jesus promised in order to make every day count. So, then, we get to the question of “how?” How do we do that and make that turning point?
 - o James 4:13-17 gives us some great insight in how a life like that looks and how to change our perspective on living. Let’s look it up.

- One of the first things this James passage points us to do is to **Turn When into Now**. This passage speaks of not getting caught up in the future, but living in the present.

- Too many of us are in the when-then form of living. When we are in this pattern of living, we end up wishing our lives away. This pattern of living says things like:
 - o “When such and such happens, then I’ll do...”
 - o “When I get to this point...I’ll be happy.”
 - o “When I get a good job...I’ll finally tithe.”
 - o “When I get a nice home...I’ll host a life group.” Or, “when life gets a little less busy, I’ll get involved in a life group.
 - o “When we’re more financially stable...we’ll have kids.”
 - o “When my job gets under control...I’ll spend time with the kids.”
 - o “When the kids get out of the house...we’ll work on our marriage.”

- The problem is that WHEN – THEN rarely happens! If you’re waiting for things to line up and be in control, you are going to waste your life just counting down the days to something that is NEVER going to happen!
 - o I don’t know what your “When – Then” is, but today is the day to ask God to turn “THEN” into “NOW.”
 - o Why? Because life is brief. We know that, right? Just yesterday, I was in my 20s. Then I blinked and I’m two decades way from the 20s.
 - During Family Nights, I lead the teen group that we call Powerhouse. One night, we were going around the room, introducing ourselves to each other and giving information like grade, favorite candy bar...things like that.
 - One of the kids noticed that I didn’t say my age and so they asked me how old I was. I told them, “44.” The looks on their faces! It was like I told them I was 80! To them 44 is so old.

- One girl exclaimed, “What? I thought you were 20 something.” It was like a compliment and a slam all at the same time! I liked that she thought I looked younger, but I didn’t like that they were in such shock over my age! I still feel like I’m in my 20s!
- LIFE IS BRIEF. IT’S FLEETING. We’ve got to start turning “thens” into “nows” before we don’t have any thens left. We need to live life in the moment.
 - “Wherever you are...be there.” If you’re with your kids, wife, friends...be there. Don’t be a thousand miles away focusing/working on something else. Make your nows count and give your thens over to God for him to control and to work out.
- See, you don’t know what is coming, but God does and he can set your purpose into your heart and provide you with all the whens so you can make the thens happen NOW! And, he says, “Ask me what you should do and I will tell you.” And you’ve got to trust that when he tells you, he will supply what you need to do what he tells you!
 - Further trust him when he directs you so that you don’t put off something for now. When we put stuff off, it sucks the joy from our lives and the purpose from our days.
 - This is why the psalmist writes in *Psalms 118:24 This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.*
 - I didn’t used to get that verse, because I would think, “Well, what if today was just a cruddy day or I already know it is going to be a cruddy day? How can I rejoice in that?” But, that verse is saying “live THIS day and make it count! If you are so busy trying to get through the day and counting down the moment, you will most certainly miss the rejoicing that could come from the day with God in control of the day.
- The next turning point action step that will help us be able to rejoice more and have an eternal focus is that we need to **Turn Intentions into Actions**. If you’re like most people, you have some seriously good intentions in your heart. But like most, you probably haven’t gotten around to doing them yet.
 - James 4:17 (New International Version) says this, “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.” I don’t know about you, but that’s the kind of verse that hits me upside my head and when I want to say, “OK, God, that hit hurt!”
 - There’s a lot of good I have in mind to do, but I haven’t gotten around to it yet! Anyone else in the same boat?
- I’ve never been to England. I hope to one day. Several of my friend have and they have talked about the “Metro” or the “Tube” that is in London. Its equivalent to our subway system.

- One of my friends stated that when he was riding the tube that when the doors open for you to get out a ladies voice goes, “Mind the Gap.” When he heard that, he didn’t know what it meant since there are many phrases used in England that aren’t familiar to an American– until he tripped on the gap that exists between the train and the landing! Then, he understand what she was saying that the need for the caution!
- There’s a different kind of “Gap” in all of our lives. It’s the GAP between **intentions** and **actions**. What good intentions has God given you that have gone undone?
 - Do you intend to reach out to someone who doesn’t know Christ. To express your love for someone. To encourage someone. Say “thank you” to someone who made a difference in your life. To go on a mission trip.
 - Friday, five people from this congregation boarded a plane to go to Haiti. These are people who decided to “mind the gap.” Two of those people really had to think about it before they went. One of those had already told someone that he would not go to Haiti and this is now his second time going. All of them had to sacrifice and save money in order to go. They all turned their intentions into action.
 - Maybe you intend to give an extravagant gift. To use your gifts to serve here in our church. Here’s one – to apologize to your spouse. Why is that so hard?? Maybe God is telling you to forgive someone.
- Have you ever thought that failing to do them is sinful? It’s time to close the GAP because life is brief and if you don’t mind the gap, you are going to end up tripping up in God’s purpose and plan for you!
 - I can’t tell you the times I’ve counseled with people who were filled with regret. A dad who wishes he’d spent more time with the family. A daughter who wishes she’d told her mom she loved her. A spouse to wishes they wouldn’t have taken their marriage for granted.
 1. So much regret in our lives happens because of good intentions but no follow through.
- It’s time to TURN INTENTIONS INTO ACTION! Do what God puts in your heart...and do it NOW. Delayed obedience is disobedience.
 - *Proverbs 3:27-28* says “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, “Come back tomorrow and I’ll give it to you” - when you already have it with you.
 - Do it now...today...before the sun goes down...before your next meal. Here’s the big one: Do it before the devil or your fears can talk you out of it!
 - DO IT NOW!
- So, to live with an eternal purpose, turn WHEN into NOW, Turn INTENTIONS into ACTIONS and...

- Finally **Turn Your Whole Heart Toward Jesus**. We will never have an eternal focus that changes our lives if our whole hearts are not turned toward Jesus. The James passage we read said that instead of us making our plans, we should say, “If the Lord wants us to...” That’s what Jesus did – he always went to his Father first. Then, his Father told him what to do and he did it.
 - During Jesus’ last month of life, Jesus set himself for us. In following his example, we are to be set on Jesus with our whole heart.
 - Luke 9:51 tells us, “As the time drew near for him to ascend to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” He resolutely set out to go to Jerusalem to do what? To suffer and to die. For who? For us.
 - If we are to take up our cross like Jesus did, we must to resolutely set our hearts on Jesus.

- The fact is that too many people, too many Christians, turn just a portion of their hearts toward Jesus. It’s kind of like getting the flu shot.
 - A few years ago, I rarely got a flu shot. Then, I got the flu. I was also newly pregnant at the time with Stephen. I was never so sick in my life as when I got the flu. Because I was pregnant, I couldn’t take anything. The flu turned into pneumonia so that they did give me antibiotics. Maybe some of you remember. I was sick and at home for two weeks. It was horrible!
 - So now, every year I go see my Dr and get a flu shot. And, you probably know how the flu shot works. There is actually a little bit of the flu in the vaccine so it will make you resistant to the whole thing.

- You know, that’s just what many “Christians” do. They have just enough of Jesus to make them resistant to the REAL THING.
 - Little bit of church...little bit of prayer...little bit of giving ...little bit of good deeds...little bit of worship...little Jesus-fish...little Easter... little WWJD bracelet...Things get rough...little bit of prayer...
 - Did you know that when you do that you fool yourself. It’s like what Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:4 that if we do that we “have a form of Godliness but deny the power.”
 - It looks like the real deal, but there’s no POWER! There’s no power for mindset change or heart change or life change. There’s no power because there’s not enough Jesus – there’s just a little bit.

- It’s like the religious leader who was asking Jesus questions in order to try to trick him. The man asked Jesus what was the greatest command. What did Jesus tell him – love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Then Jesus told him the second greatest commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.
 - The religious leader was impressed with Jesus’ answer and complimented Jesus on his answer. *Mark 12:34* tells us Jesus’ reply. It says, “*When Jesus*

saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

- This religious leader knew so much religious stuff. He even knew that Jesus' answer was a good one. But, for all his knowledge, he didn't know he was standing before the very Son of God, the Messiah!

- Honestly, I think that's the most dangerous place in the world to be – when you've got a little bit of Jesus and you're not far from the Kingdom of God.
 - You're just close enough to think you have it, but just far enough away to miss it. You have the FORM...but you're missing the POWER.
 - I don't want just a little bit of Jesus! I don't want to get close the Kingdom of God and then not get it. I want it all! I want my heart to beat for Jesus so that my life will be lived in a different kind of way.

- As we're approaching Easter, why don't we start living like we're dying? Let's start living like we have only one month to live. That's what Jesus did. We're going to look at how that knowledge and eternal mindset set his course for him to do some very specific things.
 - If you were approached by a video team and asked the question they were asked in the video we saw at the beginning, what specific things would you do?
 - Would you seek God more passionately? Would you serve Him with more heart/zeal? Would you finally tell others about him? Would you invite everyone you knew to Easter Sunday to meet Jesus?

- Let's begin now. Let's turn WHEN into NOW. Let's turn INTENTIONS into ACTIONS. Let's turn our WHOLE HEART to God. Let's see how we will truly live to make every day count – just like Jesus did!.