

One Month to Live #2
The Death of Delaying
Teen Challenge Sunday
2/28/16

- When I was living in Chicago I attended the New Life Church. The founding pastor there was Mark Jobe. He founded that church and in 10 years, it grew to consist of two congregations – an English speaking one and a Spanish speaking one. The English speaking service typically had 500 people in attendance and the Spanish one typically had 150 or so in attendance.
 - o On Sunday, Pastor Mark shared about praying for people who need to come to the Lord. He shared that one time, a concerned mother came to ask him for prayer during the altar call. She wanted prayer for her young adult son, let's call him John, who had gotten involved with drugs and was making poor choices. He had left home and was living who knew where. He would contact her occasionally to ask for money for food, but she suspected that he used it for drugs. She asked that Pastor Mark would pray for her son to see his need for Jesus and to come home.
 - o This, though, is what Pastor Mark prayed: "God, I pray right now in the name of Jesus that today, this very moment, you intervene in John's life right now so that he might see his need for you. Right now, make his life miserable. Right now, make his life void of joy. Right now, make everything that comes his way bring him down further until he hits rock bottom! Today, bring him suffering and troubles..."
 - o Suddenly, the mother interrupted, "No! That's not what I wanted you to pray for! I don't want that for him. Why are you praying that?"
 - o Pastor Mark replied, "Do you want your son to live his life to Jesus or not?" "Of course," she stated. "Do you want this to happen now or later?" "Now," she answered. "Well then, he's going to have to come to a point where he realizes that what he's doing will only bring him suffering and pain. Only then, when he is at rock bottom will he finally look up and see the hand of Jesus reaching for him so that he will reach up and allow Jesus to take control and rescue him. You have been helping him live without Jesus. But, Jesus wants him to get to a point where he gets to the end of himself and is desperate for help." The mother took a deep breath and said, "Well then, keep praying."

- Pastor Mark tapped into a pattern that plagues our human nature. That is the pattern that we often have hit rock bottom before reaching out to Jesus. We have to get caught in our sin before we repent of our sin. Until we get caught, there is little motivation to stop the sin that we like.
 - o Some call it "having to learn the hard way." Some even proudly proclaim, "Well, I'm just the kind of person who has to learn the hard way" or who "learned from the school of hard knocks." Some people would rather get knocked before they actually learn their lesson and then brag about it!

- Really the prideful bragging boils down to bragging about self-sufficiency and doing it your own way, not anyone else's. After all, why would anyone want to learn from the mistakes of someone else? It's much more fun to make your own, suffer the consequences and then learn your lesson, right? Kind of a weird logic, isn't it?
- So many people have delayed getting right with the Lord and committing their lives to Jesus because of this attitude and pattern. So many days, weeks, months, years have been wasted because of this idea of "learning from making your own mistakes" and "waiting until you are ready" to give Jesus full control.
 - I have said many times that when I look back on the five years that I chose to walk away from the Lord, I mourn for those years. When I look at where I could have been now if I would have remained faithful, I mourn for that. When I see the witness I could have been for friends, I mourn for that. While I learned much during those years, I would have learned so much more if I would have remained in Christ. Wasted years focusing on myself and finding nothing.
 - See, when you delay and wait, your heart has time to harden and each passing day, week, month, year makes it less likely that you will turn to Jesus. That is why Pastor Mark prayed that misery would come to young John right now!
- Last week, we started a new sermon series leading up to Easter called "One Month to Live." The main question that we are going to ask over and over during this series is: **How would your life be different if you knew today you had only one month to live?**
 - One of the things we determined last week was that if we only had one month to live, we would turn "thens" into "nows." No longer would we say, when this happens, then I will do this. Nope. You would turn those "thens" now because you know your time is limited.
 - In addition, you would also turn your intentions into actions. We all have good intentions, but we haven't gotten around to doing them yet. Knowing we have limited time, we would be more motivated to complete all of those good intentions.
 - And, with limited time, we would probably turn our whole heart to Jesus. We would get out of the pattern of "learning the hard way" because the ultimate "hard way" would be upon us and that is death.
- Yet, what we are called to realize is that in order to really live, we have to live as though we are dying. This is what Jesus did. We have to live as if we only have one month to live. We have to stop waiting, stop delaying, stop trying to learn lessons in our own timing and in our own way so that we stop wasting time that we could be living. Only in Jesus is true living possible.
 - Our theme verse for this series is Psalm 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."

- When we start living in this reality, then we can commit to stop waiting or delaying and instead grasp the fullness of life, making every day count as blessings from the Lord.
- Then, we will see delaying and waiting to do life God's way as what is really is – a waste of the short time we have on earth!
 - In fact, the only times in the Bible that people are told to wait or delay is when they are waiting for the Lord to do something. In Psalms, we are instructed to wait on the Lord, rather than take revenge into our own hands. We are instructed in the New Testament to wait patiently for the Lord's return. Jesus' disciples and followers were instructed to wait for the Lord to send his Holy Spirit. We are to wait on the Lord.
 - But, the time is now, today, we are not to delay giving our lives to the Lord. Get ready, Jesus is coming! The time is here! Today is the day of salvation! Don't wait to put your hope in the Lord lest you find that your time is over. Those are the words of Scripture.

- If we fail to be urgent for the Lord and the life he gives and instead delay or wait until we are ready, we will find some very real consequences. The first is that delaying living a truly full life with Jesus ends up costing us more in the long run...
 - I want to share another Chicago story with you. I moved to Chicago the end of 1993 and lived there for four years. But, two years before I moved there, something huge happened that could have been prevented. See, for most of the decade between 1982 and 1992, Chicagoans who worked in the Loop, the downtown business district which was booming at the time, could easily ignore the city's budget crisis. Even Washington's cutback of aid to cities didn't seem to hurt business in the Loop.
 - But that all came to a grinding, or maybe better termed a gushing halt as they learned one price of neglecting the underpinnings of all that economic growth. One day, a quarter billion gallons of murky Chicago River water gushed into a 60-mile network of turn-of-the-century freight tunnels under the Loop and brought nearly all businesses to a soggy halt.
 - It turned out that a top city official had known about the leak, but, acting for a cash-strapped government, had delayed repairs costing only about \$50,000. The final cost of the damage would run higher than \$1 billion.

- Likewise, I can't tell you how many people I have seen wait to truly give control to the Lord or who have even told me, "I'm just not ready. I will. Just not right now." And, I've watched their lives get filled with drama and sin and crisis and mess which all lead to one negative consequence after another which compiled upon one another. It ends up costing people their families, their reputation, their outlook, God's intended blessing on their lives and even their very heart.
 - For even though they made the decision to wait, when the consequences come...and they will...these very same people tend to blame God for their choice to

delay or wait to turn to him. The longer you wait to live for God, the less likely you are to ever do it! That, is really the ultimate consequence.

- Because the second result of delaying or waiting to live life to the full with Jesus is that Delaying could even cost us our very lives or the lives of ones we love...
 - o Dr. George Sweeting a published pastor wrote this: "Several years ago our family visited Niagara Falls. It was spring, and ice was rushing down the river. As I viewed the large blocks of ice flowing toward the falls, I could see that there were carcasses of dead fish embedded in the ice. Gulls by the score were riding down the river feeding on the fish. As they came to the brink of the falls, their wings would go out, and they would escape from the falls.
 - o "I watched one gull which seemed to delay and wondered when it would leave. It was engrossed in the carcass of a fish, and when it finally came to the brink of the falls, out went its powerful wings. The bird flapped and flapped and even lifted the ice out of the water, and I thought it would escape. But it had delayed too long so that its claws had frozen into the ice. The weight of the ice was too great, and the gull plunged into the abyss."
 - o He went on to say, "The finest attractions of this world become deadly when we become overly attached to them. They may take us to our destruction if we cannot give them up. Oh, the danger of delay!"

- It makes me wonder, how many people have ended up spending eternity in hell because they were waiting to do all the sinning that they wanted to do before they would turn their lives over to Jesus. Or, how many people have ended up spending eternity in hell because we delayed in telling them anything about Jesus or just plain refused because we didn't see it as our responsibility. Both are sobering, but all too real, thoughts.

- This morning, if you had one month to live, would you still wait on living life to the full with Jesus? Have you neglected the fact in some way that your life is brief? You haven't thought about it and you certainly don't live as though you are dying. If you want to live like you are dying so that you can live to the full, then you will have to put delaying to death in your life.
 - o How have you delayed to do what God has told you to do? Maybe, like some of the testimonies we have heard who delayed giving up addictions until they hit rock bottom. Thanks be to God that he was in control of their rock bottom and pulled them up from the mire before it was too late.
 - o Maybe you have delayed really getting serious about a relationship with Jesus. Oh, you respect him, you believe he is the Messiah, but you still want to control your life, not willing to give him complete control. You say, "I have plenty of time. I'm not ready yet." You will never be ready with that attitude! You will never be ready if you aren't ready to live like you are dying and live free from delays that could cost you more than you want to pay.

- Maybe you have delayed in telling someone about Jesus. Maybe you have delayed in inviting people to church. Maybe you heard the Easter Invitation Challenge and thought, “Nope, not going to do it. I don’t care what you say, Pastor, I’m not going to do it. My church attendance is personal and I don’t want to shove it on to anyone else.”
 - o I saw a video that was posted on social media from a very famous atheist, Penn Jillette. He and his partner, Teller, have a long-standing magic and illusion show in Las Vegas. He posted a video to share about a Christian guy who came to his show and afterward, witnessed to him about Jesus and gave him a Bible.
 - o Penn was not offended by this Christian. Instead, he said, “I felt like he was very genuine and that he truly cared about me.” He went on to say that he believes the ultimate hypocrite is a Christian who doesn’t witness about Jesus. He said, “If you believe that you have the answer for life, you believe that you have the answer for salvation and that you know there is eternal life for those who have that salvation and eternal damnation for those who don’t, but you don’t share it, how much more of a hypocrite could you possibly be. I mean, how much do you have to hate someone to not tell them about Jesus and the possibility of eternal life?”

- The time is now! Today is the day to stop delaying, to stop waiting, to stop relying on yourself and your own petty lessons and stubborn prideful will and really experience life to its fullest.
 - o The time is now do what God has purposed for you to do. The time is now to not just be hearers of the Word, but doers.
 - o The time is now to speak salvation and not just enjoy your own salvation. The time is now to love someone enough that you share with them the Way, the Truth and the Life that can only be found in Jesus so that they might have eternal life.
 - o Don’t wait. Do it now! In the name of Jesus!