

Text: II Corinthians 5:1-10

Title: "Picture This"

Introduction: Over the past few weeks, we have been talking about truths and how they affect our lives. We know that there are consequences to every mistruth that we believe in and act upon. We know that if we listen to the truths that come front and center in our lives, that's going to mean change for us: change in how we conduct ourselves in our work place, how we conduct ourselves as parents, how we conduct ourselves with our finances, how we conduct ourselves in our relationships ... so over the past few weeks, we have listened in as Jesus has shared TRUTH in the 1st Century and tried to connect with how that Truth is still Truth here in 2010.

Brief recap: We've heard Jesus teach us that living for God is not about a cosmic scale that keeps tabs on how much good and bad we do and as long as we have more good than bad, we're okay. We've heard Jesus teach that it's more important to focus on the "Undeniable" than the "Unexplainable" – we are not going to have all of our questions about God, eternity, the Messiah and the Kingdom answered before we follow Christ ... we will never be able to keep God in a box and fully explain all about God. Then we heard that God knows better than we do on how to live this life and even if society and media and professors and even our parents teach that something will quench our thirst ... it's not always true. We listened in as the religious leaders of the day attempted to trick Jesus into not being the Son of God. We found out that Jesus is not easily tricked by us either. God is the "OH, GREAT GOD". Last weekend, we saw Jesus take full command of a room with a new sunroof ... He reminded us that He (and only He) knows what we NEED the most. Many of us have eyes only for this world, where God wants us to see the way God sees it ... eternity. Forgiveness needs to be at the top of our priority list!

Tonight, we are going to look at a couple of Truths that are a little bit different. They are different, because for each of us here, we will have a definite moment of facing these Truths. Even if we don't believe these Truths or don't live like we believe these Truths, they are coming our way and each of us will face them in our own way...

These are going to make us a little uncomfortable. Unlike the other Truths that we have talked about that could impact us at any time ... things that I hope and pray that each of us will deal with what was taught as TRUTH (God's Word), the Truths that we are going to talk about tonight ... you really don't have a choice.

So, I want us to look at these two Truths. The first Truth, I think we will all be able to agree upon. The 2nd Truth is something that you may or may not believe or maybe want to debate about and I understand that. As a matter of fact, if there was one thing that I could rip out of the Bible while God wasn't looking, it might be that ... this is the section of Scripture that I would certainly think about getting rid of!

Okay, so here's the first Truth that we are going to all meet up with some day ... for each person in this room, time is going to run out! You knew that one, right?!? I don't have to pull up a verse out of the Bible for that one. You all know that this life is going to, at some point, end; for each of us!

It really doesn't matter what you believe tonight in your faith. Maybe you don't believe in God; maybe you don't follow Christianity; maybe you have a strong faith in Jesus Christ; maybe you still like to believe what you want to believe about Jesus Christ, even if it's not Biblical ... doesn't matter when it comes to this one, does it? We all know that for each human being time is going to run out! This is an **UNDENIABLE TRUTH**. We cannot deny it or get away from it. **BUT**, here's the strange thing: most of us don't live like it's an **UNDENIABLE TRUTH**!

We live like we think we will never die! If we have to face it through the loss of a loved one or friend or whatever, we get out of the funeral and all breath this sigh of relief and head back to business as usual, right?!?

It's uncomfortable, but this is **TRUE**! Why is this important? We've said throughout this series that when we **IGNORE TRUTH**, it takes us to bad places ... it does not make our situation, our life, etc. better; ever (Marriage, finances, relationships, business, etc.)!

So, why do our actions speak way louder than our words when it comes to our conduct in light of this Truth? Why do we live (relationships, marriages, work-place, faith, etc.) like we will never die?

Do you know why we live like we have no idea that some day we will die? Well, for Christians, I think it has to do with the fact that we don't believe the Bible. Because, if we believed the Bible, this is a Truth (death) that would be front and center all of the time! If we believed the Bible, this Truth would dictate how we lived, how we were in relationship, how we spent our money, how we responded to being the Church and serving the Kingdom and how we spent our time.

Again, I think it's because we don't believe the Bible. We love certain verses when we need them ... we will go to heaven when we die and we'll be in Paradise with Jesus and we'll get to have perfect bodies, our loved ones will be in a better place etc. **BUT**, we don't want to think about it if we don't have to. Even though it's **TRUE** ... Every minute that passes is one minute closer to when we die! That's the **TRUTH**!

If you're not a Christian, I know that you have some sort of belief of what happens when you die, but you're not sure ... for sure, what's going to happen.

The other reason we don't want to think about it is that we don't want to leave the people that we love. Of course we don't want to think about it; **BUT**, it's the **TRUTH** ... we are all dying. And if we actually left it in front of us and dealt with that **FACT**, it would change how we think about everything, wouldn't it. We would probably change some of the things we do and how we live, right?!?

Okay, if this is the **TRUTH**, and it is ... if we are going to **DIE**, and we are ... then comes the question, "How should we **LIVE**?" Let's imagine how we should live our lives in light of the fact that your time is running out. What should you be doing and what should you do different if we know that time is passing by, today?

If you believe that this life is it and there is nothing after and we just turn back to dust, that will dictate how you live your remaining time here on earth. If you believe that we live somewhere after this life; we all go to heaven or some go to heaven and some go to purgatory, or some go to heaven and some go to hell and eternity is a long time, and if you believe that what happens here on earth comes into play with where you end up or how we live out eternity, then, those beliefs will dictate what you do **TODAY**!

REALITY = each one of us here will eventually have life as you know it END!
When we ignore what is reality and True, there is a price to pay, right?!? How should we live our life ... how will this affect our daily decisions??

I bet that the older you are here tonight, the more you've thought about this. Regardless of our age, we need to think about it more than we probably do! This is a REALITY for each and every one of us...

The Second REALITY is one that we will probably argue about a little more, not quite as definite as death, but I will argue it's TRUTH because of who said it.

Before we go to our Scripture, let me remind you that Jesus talked often about what happens to us after we die. Most of his parables (stories with a point) were about what happens to us after this life. He talked often, not so much about heaven, but the Kingdom of God. "The Kingdom of God is like this..." Jesus talked a lot about the Kingdom that is somewhere out there ... hard for us to grasp, but True. Jesus talked about 'what you do in this life is going to determine what it's like for you after this life'. It's up to you to decide if you believe what Jesus says...

Jesus said again and again what the distinction was between those who trust Him in this life verses what is going to happen to those who DON'T trust Him in this life. Something will be common for ALL OF US though ... whether we trusted Jesus and lived like it or not, Jesus said that ALL OF US will have to give an account for how we lived! We will owe Someone an explanation for our lives and our lifestyles. Jesus says that even though you may not feel like you have to be accountable to anyone here in this life, we will all be held accountable by God!

We don't need to be asking, "How much time do I have left?", but "What am I doing with the time that I have left?" Why? Because what we do with the time that we have left determines what will happen to us AFTER this LIFE! If this is TRUE, how should you live your life?!?

After Jesus died, rose again and went up into heaven, the men who followed Jesus took His teachings and put them into forms that people could follow and trust that they were doing what Jesus did and would have them do. One of these men was PAUL. Paul was a hater of the Christian movement back in the 1st Century who God knocked off of his high horse. After that encounter with God, Paul became the greatest advocate for Christianity and wrote most of the New Testament!

Two major letters he wrote that became Books of the Bible were written to the church in Corinth. This is from the 2nd Letter to that Church: II Corinthians 5:1ff.

I. After Life According to Scripture

- A. (V. 1) Paul was a tent-maker and the Corinthians knew it ... this body is temporary (tent); God is going to make us a house in heaven (a permanent, perfect body!).
- B. (V. 2) These bodies get tired, don't they? They break down, don't they? They succumb to disease and fatigue and pain and there are times we just want to be done with them ... we long to not have to deal with the pain anymore.
- C. (V. 3) We will be able to get rid of these imperfect bodies and put on our heavenly bodies!

- D. (V. 4) Paul's fancy way of saying that this body is dying... and we, who experience stress and ailments and disease and pressure and all that we get in this life ... we groan and long for something NEW! Calgon, take me away!
- E. (V.5) You need to know that whatever is next is what God is up to. It was God's idea and God knows what God is doing with this whole temporary body thing. Then, the GUARANTEE is His HOLY SPIRIT.
1. When you became a Christian, God says that at that moment, you unlock the Spirit of God inside of you.
 2. For some of you, you experienced that in that there were things before you gave your life to Christ that didn't bother you, but afterwards it did bother you.
 3. For some of you, before you gave your life 100% over to Jesus Christ, the Bible didn't matter to you a lick; BUT, afterward you could not get enough of it ... you had to keep reading and studying.
 4. For some of you, worship didn't make sense and seemed kind of corny; but, when you gave your life over to Jesus Christ and His Spirit came alive in you, you couldn't wait to worship the next time!
 5. Here's what Paul is saying: Those actions of the Spirit inside of you are your guarantee that God is at work through death and life – God's Plan! There is something more after this life! The Holy Spirit reminds us that we need to think about how we are living, not how much time we have left.
- F. (V. 6) What a great word ... "Confident". Paul was confident that what God said about a life after was True. Paul lived in the 1st Century and there were hundreds of eyewitnesses to Jesus resurrection ... hundreds who saw Jesus in bodily form again AFTER they had seen him die on a cross. Paul was CONFIDENT that there was more to life than this...
- G. (V. 7) Live by believing = not by sight!
- H. (V. 8) Paul = something more after this life. It's going to be BETTER!
- I. (V. 9) = Whether here or there / this body of the next body, "OUR GOAL IS TO PLEASE HIM." Why? Why should I live my life for Someone I can't see or prove or make my friends believe in!?
- J. (V. 10) = Paul used what was common in his culture. In every Roman city there was a "Judgment Seat". A raised seat where the Governor/Judge for the city/region would come and judge court cases.
1. Paul says that there will be a "Heavenly Platform" (we really don't know exactly how this is going to work, but this is Paul's picture), and the Judge will be God and all of us will have to stand before that platform and give an account for the Good things and the Bad things we have done in THIS LIFE!
 2. This is for Christians ... remember who Paul is writing to ... Paul says that at that time we will find out what we are going

- to receive back that “we DESERVE for the good or evil we have done with this earthly body.”
- K. If we believe that time is running out, can you understand why Jesus said over and over again that what matters is not HOW MUCH time we have left, but WHAT WE DO with the time we have left?
- L. Listen, here’s where it’s going to get kinda weird ... this Judgment is NOT for SIN ... this isn’t punishment for SIN; this Judgment that Paul talks about is RECOGNITION of FAITHFULNESS...
1. I Corinthians 3:11-15 = Paul clarifies this in an earlier letter to the Corinthians...
 2. The issue in The Believer’s Judgment is not sin ... it’s FAITHFULNESS!
 3. Why? Because Jesus died on a cross and took our sins with Him and we have FORGIVENESS if we ASK for it ... for the Believer’s, this is Judgment where we are rewarded for Faithfulness or overlooked for our unfaithfulness... WOW!
- M. It’s like this: When I was a kid, my little league baseball coach was really good about examining each of his players. “Mr. T” would talk to us after the game ... we’d all get a chance to cheer for who hit the home runs or doubles or pitched well or whatever. My first year, you know what I heard? “Stan, you stepped in the bucket every time at bat again!” I didn’t get a reward for that. I didn’t get cheered by my teammates... Some of you can’t stand coaches like that! The next year I was cheered often. You know why? I quit stepping in the bucket!
- N. Now, here’s a TRUTH that might not sit well with you tonight ... Once we die and we stand in front of the Judgment as BELIEVERS, the Scripture teaches that there will be believers who are crying and gnashing their teeth () because of a life that was not lived well according to our faith.
- O. The issue that day will not be for their sin. The issue that day is that they don’t get the ‘game ball’! Why? They didn’t do very well in this life.
1. Weeping and gnashing of teeth at the realization of the opportunity / opportunities that they missed. They were here! They had friends!
 2. Meanwhile they are watching other women and men who are getting rewarded because of their dedication and consistency in living the way God wants us to. Rewarded because of their sacrifice in this life for the good of the Kingdom of God. Rewarded because they stood for God when everyone else was falling prey to the culture.
 3. Some of us are going to look back over our lives in that day and realize that we missed our chances to make a difference for the Kingdom ... with our friends, with our family, with our co-workers, with our classmates ...

4. Do you know what I'm afraid we are going to see on that day when we hope to be rewarded? The faces of the people we led AWAY from God instead of TOWARD God! And we are going to know ... that friend, that co-worker, that relative of mine—didn't even make it to the Believer's Judgment. They already heard Jesus say to them, "I NEVER KNEW YOU!"
- P. Do you know what I see in this Scripture? God has chosen to reward those who have shown great FAITHFULNESS in this TEMPORARY Life ... remember, Seeing Life with God's ETERNAL EYES!
- Q. Do you know why Paul wrote this? Because he believed that Jesus spoke more about the Kingdom of God than anything else for a reason ... Jesus continually said, "Look beyond this life ... I know it's uncomfortable right now ... look beyond this life ... I know that everyone is doing something different ... look beyond this life ... I know that you are suffering and being ridiculed ... look beyond this life..."

II. **Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation)**

- A. For those of you who didn't like that Judgment, listen to this: there is another Judgment that most of us think about ... "The Great White Throne Judgment".
1. This is the Judgment we hear about most. It's the Judgment that separates the Believers from non-Believers.
 2. This is the Judgment where people will be required to pay for their own sin, because they chose not to believe in Jesus Christ who, on the cross, paid for their sin.
- B. Some of you here tonight don't want to believe in this Judgment either, and I don't blame you... if there was one thing I kind of wish I could take out of the Bible, it's this – I wish that God would say, "Hey, one thing I didn't tell you ... EVERYBODY'S IN!"
- C. The Bible and Jesus didn't say that though ... they said that if we don't believe in Jesus and trust in Him as Savior, we won't be saved from our sin. The Bible teaches that it takes an ETERNITY to pay for our own sin...
- D. Now, this is BRIGHT! I know! But, please, stay, remain in this light of God's Word until your eyes adjust ... and then, please, put your faith in Jesus Christ for the FORGIVENESS of your sins ... and then, Live like you are going for the Game Ball! Live FAITHFULLY to God's Word through the power of the Holy Spirit in you!
- E. You all, I know that this is a little disturbing for us ... our Eternity rides on how we conduct ourselves today ... But, do you know Who was REALLY DISTURBED by this Truth? GOD! So disturbed that God sent His Only Son, to not only teach us truth and heal some people, but to hang on a cross and die ... so that we can choose that death in place of our Eternal Death...
- F. What will you choose tonight?

Let's Pray!

Special thanks to Andy Stanley for ideas and new parameters for this worship series and my preaching as a whole.