Value Every Encounter

1 Corinthians 16:19-24

“Regret for wasted time is more wasted time.”

- Mason Cooley

“Enjoy the little things in life, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things.”

- Robert Breault

“Whether it's the best of times or the worst of times, it's the only time we've got.”

-Art Burchwald

“Don't worry about failures; worry about the chances you miss when you don't even try.”

- Jack Canfield

“Today is life – the only life you are sure of. Make the most of today. Get interested in something. Shake yourself awake. Develop a hobby. Let the winds of enthusiasm sweep through you. Live today with gusto.”

- Dale Carnegie

“It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth - and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up - that we will begin to live each day to the fullest, as if it was the only one we had.”

- Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

I share these quotes, because I have been thinking about the preciousness of our lives and the relationships that God has given us with each other. None of us knows when tragedy may strike for either us or the ones we value and love.

As Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus:

15 So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise. 16 Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. 17 Don’t act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. 18 Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, 19 singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. 20 And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:15-20 NLT

This ties in nicely to the Apostle Paul’s conclusion of his 1st letter to the Corinthians. It would be easy to just glance right over these last few verses, but I think they say a lot. Let’s begin with 1 Corinthians 16:19.

19 The churches here in the province of Asia send greetings in the Lord, as do Aquila and Priscilla and all the others who gather in their home for church meetings.

20 All the brothers and sisters here send greetings to you.

These two verses remind those who are reading or listening to Paul’s letter, that there are many others who are in the fight with them. And in fact, it seems that they are even wishing that they could be with them.

When someone you know is going to spend time with someone else you know, you probably say something like “When you see them say ‘Hi’ for me.” Even though this is often just a nicety, it may be communicating a genuine desire to see them.

On that thought I will say, if you are in this situation, send your greeting…And mean it. After all, as has already been said,

“It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth - and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up - that we will begin to live each day to the fullest, as if it was the only one we had.”

Or in the biblical form…

“Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.” The days aren’t just evil in the sense that people are doing bad things. The days are evil in that, one of these days, your time on earth will end. It is this sentiment that leads the apostle Paul to say…

Greet each other with a sacred kiss.

With this he doesn’t necessarily mean go around kissing everyone. A sacred kiss indicated that the two people participating valued each other greatly. The same is true for us. We should be finding ways to demonstrate how much we appreciate each other.

Give someone a gift or receive a gift with gratitude.

Tell someone how they have (positively) affected your life. (Words of Affirmation)

Join in with someone in doing something that brings them joy! (Quality time)

Provide a service to someone who isn’t expecting it. (Act of Service)

Put your hand on someone’s shoulder or hug them or even kiss them if it is appropriate (physical touch).

These are what Dr. Gary Chapman calls the Five Love Languages. When we do these things they demonstrate that we value our time and our relationships. Life lived to it’s fullest is focused on relationships, not stuff.

As we move on to the end of the chapter Paul shares his final emphasis in his relationship with the hearers or in our case the readers.

21 HERE IS MY GREETING IN MY OWN HANDWRITING—PAUL.

22 If anyone does not love the Lord, that person is cursed. Our Lord, come!

As we consider our relationships our main concern should be fixed on the love that Jesus has for us and the blessings we have due to our resulting love for Him. People who do not know and love our Lord Jesus truly are cursed!

They are cursed because they do not understand the forgiveness that He provides and the newness of life that can bring about the fullest life possible. Without Jesus we are cursed to a life on a hamster wheel.

What I mean by that is without Jesus we are doomed to constantly weigh our lives against what could have been or should have been. And even the most successful unbelievers feel like they come up short. Even for those of us who believe…Have any of you ever got to the end of a day and felt like…You know what I couldn’t have done any better. I literally crushed every opportunity. If we ever feel like that then we probably need higher standards. One of the benefits of knowing the love of Jesus is that we do not live under that curse. Though we are commanded to make the most of every opportunity, we also know that God’s mercies are new every day.

Before I move into the last two verses of the book I want to share two important attributes of who Jesus is. We talk about Jesus a lot, but it is easy to just throw His name around without really considering who He is.

In order to consider this I would like to take you to Matthew 16:

Jesus has just taken seven loaves of bread and a few small fish and miraculously fed 4000 men and all the women and children who were present. He had jumped in a boat with His disciples and during their journey they had this discussion.

5 Later, after they crossed to the other side of the lake, the disciples discovered they had forgotten to bring any bread. 6 “Watch out!” Jesus warned them. “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

7 At this they began to argue with each other because they hadn’t brought any bread. 8 Jesus knew what they were saying, so he said, “You have so little faith! Why are you arguing with each other about having no bread? 9 Don’t you understand even yet? Don’t you remember the 5,000 I fed with five loaves, and the baskets of leftovers you picked up? 10 Or the 4,000 I fed with seven loaves, and the large baskets of leftovers you picked up? 11 Why can’t you understand that I’m not talking about bread? So again I say, ‘Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’”

12 Then at last they understood that he wasn’t speaking about the yeast in bread, but about the deceptive teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

14 “Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.”

15 Then he asked them, “But who do you say I am?”

16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

17 Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.

We see here that Jesus is the Son of God. Simon Peter says it and Jesus confirms it. Only the Son of God could be their Savior and Messiah.

But Jesus doesn’t stop there, because not only is He the Savior, He is also the Judge.

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. 25 If 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. 26 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? 27 For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds. 28 And I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.”

Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man.

He is as Daniel described:

13 As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

Daniel 9:13-14 NLT

He is our Savior and the Judge of the whole world.

The disciples who had been seriously concerned about bread, were being taught to shift their focus from material needs of this world to the spiritual concerns of life now and everlasting.

The apostle Paul by telling his listeners “Greet each other with a holy kiss.” And

“If anyone does not love the Lord, that person is cursed.” Is reminding those who hear that we have been made for relationship with God and that we are to be sober about the spiritual needs of those who we are in relationship with.

Life is meant to be lived to the fullest, not under a curse, but with the joy that comes from knowing Jesus as Savior so that we need not fear Him as Judge.

So don’t wait another day to get to know Jesus. And if you already know Him and love Him, do not delay in your efforts to make Him known by greeting people with a “Holy Kiss.”

23 May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

24 My love to all of you in Christ Jesus.