

Raphael O Shivprashad Memorial Service – March 2, 2002

Text: Jn 5:16-30

Topic Statement:

We are not ready to live, until we are prepared to die!

Three-fold task of a Pastor at Funerals/Memorial Service:

1. *Comfort the bereaved*
2. *Honour the deceased*
3. *Confront people with the claims of the Gospel*

Life Through the Son

¹⁶So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. ¹⁷Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." ¹⁸For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

¹⁹Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." ²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. ²¹For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²²Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him.

²⁴"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

²⁵I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. ²⁶For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. ²⁷And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

²⁸"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. ³⁰By myself I can do nothing: I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

Introduction:

Stephen Covey in his National Best Seller: *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, talks about "*Beginning with the End in Mind*." In this book he talks about living effective lives. He says, to live effectively, we need a plan. How does one come up with the plan? Well, Covey suggests that one way to do it is that you think about your funeral and imagine four people reflecting on your life. These four people are: a family member, a friend, a colleague from work and someone from your church or community organisation. Think about what you would have liked these people to say. Plan your life in terms of this. Live your life in the light of this!

I do a lot of work for a men's Organisation: Promise Keepers. One of the things we tell/remind men is that the number one regret of most men when they come to the end of their life is not that they wished they had a bigger home, a better car, a couple more digits to the yearly income, climb a few more rungs on the corporate ladder of success. The number one regret is that they did not spend enough time cultivating better relationships. They regretted, not having stayed a little closer to home.

Let us imagine for the sake of interest and instruction that today it was your funeral/memorial service we were here to attend. What would the four people say? What would be your greatest regrets? For Reff Shivprashad, his eternal destiny is sealed. You have heard how he lived. Now that cannot be changed. But you can change yours. I hope you will change yours.

Exposition:

We plan and prepare for things that are less sure and of less consequence. How much more should we plan our death. Let me offer a few suggestions to you on how to plan a life from beginning to end. To live with less regrets and live effective lives. But first, let us look at . . .

Why don't we make preparation to die?

1. **Intellectually**, we don't understand death. Not cessation of being, but separation. It is transition cf. Jn 5:24
2. We are **physically** and temporally oriented – we live for the here and now
3. We are **psychologically** deluded – we fool ourselves. We believe if we don't think or talk about it will go away. Some one has said, "Life is what happens when we make other plans". There is no dress rehearsal for life. This is it folks! We do not get another chance to do it over. Many of us are busy climbing the ladder of success, only to realise in the end that the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall.

Illustration:

At the funeral of a mutual friend, one friend turns to another and asked, how much did he leave? The reply, "He left all of it."

At death, many of our accomplishments are:

- Empty victories
- Shallow and hollow success

4. We are **spiritually** dead, dull and deceived. Satan, the god of this age has blinded our minds. He continues to wield the power of death over us. Remember death was not God's idea and ideal for this universe. He is the life giving and life sustaining God. He is Life.

Three Courses of Our Generation:

1. Disproportionate attention to thinks and pleasure – love things and use people
2. Misplaced priorities – Job, tasks, etc over relationships – what we carry with us
3. Unbalanced, even wasted lives – cf. Albert Einstein and counting

There are a lot of things you probably need to do. But let me talk about two:

1. **You need to prepare to leave your loved ones - PREPARE YOUR HOUSE**

- a. Men – it is estimated that women live about 10 years longer than their husbands do. Many of us marry wives a few years younger than us. What are you doing to make sure they will be taken care of? What about the children. Many of us look after our children physically/materially. What are we doing with them spiritually? What will they do with the faith of their fathers?
- b. Balance and priority
- c. Come things are more caught than taught

2. **Prepare to meet your Maker cf. Amos 4:12 – PREPARE YOUR HEART**

- a. The portion of Scripture we read from the New Testament is very instructive.

- Believers have eternal life – hear and believe
- Those who not believe are condemned
- Today Jesus is your Saviour
- In the hereafter, He will be your Judge

- b. **Authority of Jesus:**

1. In heaven and upon the earth (Matt 28:18)
2. Over all flesh (Jn 17:2)
2. Over the spiritual powers of the world (1Pet 3:22)
4. To Forgive sins (Mark 2:10)
5. To give Eternal Life (Jn 17:2)
6. To Judge (Jn 5:22)
- After death is resurrection – the greatest good is to believe in Him whom God sent – greatest evil is to reject Him.
- There are two groups at death: One group crosses from life to death – eternal separation from God. The other group passes from death to life – life with God forever.

Which group do you belong to?

1. Passing from life to death?
2. Passing from death to life?

What are you trusting?

- o Religion vs. relationships
- o My religion is older, no intrinsic value in old - in antiquity – Old, just tells you it is old
- o Tradition vs. Bible
- o Trusting in the pastor/priest, church, sacraments vs. trusting Jesus

Conclusion:

I started out by saying “We are not ready to live until we are prepared to die”.

How ready are you?

In the light of what was discussed, **how effective will your life be?** What will the four people say?

I usually like to ask **Five Deciding/Determining Questions** (cf. *Five Defining*

Questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going and How do I get there?) of people that I will like to leave with you:

1. What am I doing that will continue after I leave - **Legacy**
2. What am I doing that I will take with me when I leave? - **Character**
3. What would I do if money were not an issue? - **Values**
4. What would I do, even if money were an issue? – **Priority**
5. What is there in my life that if I don't do it will never be done and what will be the consequences for leaving them undone? **Purpose/Mission and Destiny**

God determines **when** we die. My times are in His hands.

We determine **how** we die. – Not method but state.

What will God say to you on the final day? Two alternatives:

1. Depart from me, I never knew you . . . or
2. Well done you good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord?

The only way to be ready to live and prepared to die is to let Jesus Christ be your Saviour and Lord in that order.