

TEXT STUDY 3

The Meaning of Life: A Gift from God

Third Sunday: Life Is a Gift to Be Used to God's Glory
"Why am I still here? Why won't God just let me go home?"

For the past two weeks, we've been discussing how to handle death as Christians. Today God's Word directs our focus on how to handle the life we have before we die as Christians.

The Readings:

Isaiah 45 – God knows what He's doing with us.

Psalms 90 – God has eternity in mind. Our lives here are miniscule in comparison.

2 Corinthians – God allows us to go through rough times so we can help others who go through the same things.

Matthew 25 – Everything we do for others, we do for Jesus.

1 Corinthians 10:31 – Do everything for Jesus.

Sermon Text:

^{GNT} **1 Corinthians 10:31** *ei;te ou=n evsqi,ete ei;te pi,nete ei;te ti poiei/te(pa,nta eivj do,xan qeou/ poiei/te*

^{NIV} **1 Corinthians 10:31** So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

^{KJV} **1 Corinthians 10:31** Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 10:31** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

^{NAU} **1 Corinthians 10:31** Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Context: In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul discusses those issues of conscience in which we might be fully free to do yet may bother another. The perception of others and their relationship to God can often complicate decisions we have to make on issues neither forbidden nor commanded by God. That makes many decisions difficult. In this verse, Paul sums up how we should handle all such situations: whatever we do, keep God's glory as the first priority in our decision-making. This is great advice for the sometimes- complex decisions we've been discussing these three weeks. Do it all for the glory of God...

Text Notes:

Grammatically and linguistically, this is a very simple text study. Understanding the full import of it and its application to our lives is something much more complex. This is a text

that can be used at any event and in any situation, but coupled with the other texts for the day and the theme of the series, it gives great guidance for how we view death and our life leading up to it.

ei;te - *whether...or* – Paul gives three options here, the third summing up everything.

evsqi,w - present active indicative – ongoing, whenever it is happening – *eat pi,nw* - present active indicative – ongoing, whenever it is happening – *drink poie,w* - present active indicative – ongoing, whenever it is happening – *do poie,w* - present active IMPERATIVE – Be doing it, always do it this way...

pa,nta - all of it, all encompassing, there is nothing that you do that doesn't fall into this category.

eivj - to, toward, for – This preposition shows the purpose. Do everything with the goal of the glory of God in mind.

do,xan qeou/ - The translation is very simple, but what does it mean? *For the glory of God.*

In the Old Testament, the glory of the LORD appeared as a firepot in Abraham's covenant confirmation ceremony between the animal carcasses, the burning bush to call Moses, the pillar of fire for all of Israel. Pieper defines it: "It is, to the degree that it is unfolded, a more or less complete image of the true glory, of the absolute and infinite transcendence of God over all creatures according to his all-pervading presence, His all- dominating power, His infinite grace, and His all-consuming holiness – a symbol of His absolute sovereignty, of the one and only true and perfect Lord, to whom all creatures ought to render willing obeisance and joyful service, and offer adoration, praise, and glory without end" (Pieper, August, *The Glory of the LORD*, 3).

The phrase is used repeatedly in Scripture. Consider...

^{NIV} **Acts 7:55** But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the **glory of God**, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

^{NIV} **Philippians 2:11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the **glory of God** the Father.

^{NIV} **Psalm 19:1** For the director of music. A psalm of David. The heavens declare the **glory of God**; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

^{NIV} **John 11:40** Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the **glory of God**?" *At raising of Lazarus*

^{NIV} **Romans 3:23** For all have sinned and fall short of the **glory of God**,

^{NIV} **Romans 5:2** Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the **glory of God**.

^{NIV} **Revelation 15:8** And the temple was filled with smoke from the **glory of God** and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

Revelation 21:23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the **glory of God** gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

Putting all of these thoughts together, here is an attempt at a definition of sorts:

Glory of God – It is His massiveness, His asiety, His being so far above and beyond us with our limited human capabilities that we can't even comprehend or understand His glory. It is His greatness that holds the stars in His hand and spreads them out for us (Psalm 19), his majesty and power revealed in inexpressible light and glimpsed in the burning bush and pillar of fire, the light, life and power source described in John's Revelation, it is His inexpressible love that caused God to become one of us in order to let us see His glory (Romans 5:2). We can't even see His glory and live now. So Jesus came to show it to us in a way we could grasp – in part. Yet now “we see but a poor reflection, as in a mirror, then we shall see face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12). The glory of God is the opinion and impression of Him that fits with how unlimited and extreme He is. When we do things to His glory, we are improving people's impression of God and showing a piece of His magnificence, not our own. God is so great and so good that words don't fit. Now, whatever I do is to be to that – to build up in the eyes of all who see it and hear about it how great my God is, greater than human minds could ever understand.

“We do all things for ‘God's glory’ when by our actions the excellence of God's attributes is made to shine forth so that men may see it” (Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 432).

Apply this test to anything we do: can I do this and look God in the face and say, “Thank you, God, for the opportunity to do this.”? If not, it's not being done to the glory of God. Don't do it. (Class notes from Prof. Frederich's class at NWC)

Other Relevant Passages:

Philippians 1:23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

1 Peter 2:9-12 ⁹But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ¹²Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Philippians 1:11-30 ¹²Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. ¹³As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. ¹⁵It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. ¹⁶The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here

for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ¹⁸ But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. ²⁰ I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me. ²⁷ Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved-- and that by God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Psalm 71 ¹ In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame. ² Rescue me and deliver me in your righteousness; turn your ear to me and save me. ³ Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. ⁴ Deliver me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of evil and cruel men. ⁵ For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth. ⁶ From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you. ⁷ I have become like a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge. ⁸ My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendor all day long. ⁹ Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone. ¹⁰ For my enemies speak against me; those who wait to kill me conspire together. ¹¹ They say, "God has forsaken him; pursue him and seize him, for no one will rescue him." ¹² Be not far from me, O God; come quickly, O my God, to help me. ¹³ May my accusers perish in shame; may those who want to harm me be covered with scorn and disgrace. ¹⁴ But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. ¹⁵ My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure. ¹⁶ I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone. ¹⁷ Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. ¹⁸ Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come. ¹⁹ Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God, you who have done great things. Who, O God, is like you? ²⁰ Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. ²¹ You will increase my honor and comfort me once again. ²² I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praise to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. ²³ My lips will shout for joy

when I sing praise to you-- I, whom you have redeemed. ²⁴ My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long, for those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion.

Text Thoughts:

Malady: Seeing life as living for our own glory

Telic Note: Live for the glory of God

Specific Law: Getting caught in the trap of thinking life is about me, we try to steal God's glory and harm our neighbors by not building Him up in their eyes

Specific Gospel: The zenith of the glory of God is His love revealed in Christ Jesus, and He has shown us His glory in the face of Christ.

Preaching Thoughts on Life Sunday #3

1 Corinthians 10:31 - Whether you live or die or whatever you do; heal or suffer or whatever you do; die suddenly or slowly or whatever you do...

Jesus said, "Come to me, you who are weary and burdened." He bore our burden. We show love to Jesus through those people for whom we bear a burden.

God permits *high quality* and *low quality* lives to continue for a variety of purposes. Consider the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus (Luke 16:19ff). Look at the account of the man lying in the ditch left to die. (Luke 10:30ff).

Mildred never said a word in the four years I knew her. She lay there on the nursing home bed, apparently on the brink of death. And then, her body started rejecting the food that was coming through the feeding tube, causing all sorts of problems, and the feeding had to be discontinued. The consensus was that it only a matter of time. In the 11-plus weeks that she continued living without food because all options for feeding her weren't working – she earned a nickname in that nursing home. The workers started calling her "the angel." They knew, from the pictures hung on her wall, from talking with her daughter, from hearing the devotions we had with her – they knew her help came from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. And long after any medical personnel would have said she'd be gone, God used her to give me a chance to describe God's law and sweet Gospel to the lady who cleaned her room.

Some people, some Christians don't know how to die. The "dying" relative makes someone feel guilty over things once done. Sometimes it is used as a reason to spread misery. The death of a loved one is a great time to prepare people for their own deaths. It is also a great time to display faith in how we handle it. (Paraphrased excerpt from CLR website)

Finally, if we have a time of suffering or lingering before dying, God may be giving other Christians an opportunity to perform works of faith as they care for us. Faith needs to be exercised. Love wants a chance to work. The Lord has placed a spiritual life in our hearts and He provides times for that life to go into action. St. Paul tells us, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for

us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10) Supplying our needs may be the works that God has prepared in advance for others to do. (Excerpt from CLR site)

- A spiritual resource recommended by hospice families are the devotional books written by Reverend Richard E. Lauersdorf: *Help Me, Lord: Comfort as I prepare for my loved one's death*, and *God's Children Never Die: Comfort as I face the end of my life* (Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee).

Rachel's dilemma – maybe you've experienced it: “It is so weird to see my prayers changing from ‘Make Grandma better’ to ‘Please, God, take her to heaven in peace.’”

How do you want to go? In your sleep? Hit by a truck? You don't want to think about it or feel it – just instantly with Jesus?

Many believers have told their pastor that they want Uncle So-and-So to hear about Jesus at their funeral, because then, maybe he'll be ready to listen. I pray that my funeral is an outreach event, not about me, but about Jesus. I pray yours will be the same and that you'll make sure to invite everyone to hear too.

Intro Ideas:

Paul talks about the dilemma – live or die. Two weeks ago we talked about defending the gift of life from those that would say that a life that doesn't have the apparent quality they think a life should have should be ended. In Bible study we mentioned Terri Schiavo, the woman who died of starvation because some around her determined she wasn't getting everything she wanted out of life. Last week, we talked about respecting the fact that, when God says it is time for one of his children to come home, it's time. And that is OK. God doesn't command us to use all the machinery to keep our lungs moving and our blood flowing when it's clear that God is taking us or our loved one.

Now today, the two come together. The simple truth is, we don't know when our last day on earth will come. We don't know God's plan for the end of our loved ones' lives either – at least we don't know the timetable. We know some parts of His plan, like to love and care for them, protect them and guard them.

-or-

Define happiness. Define love. Have you ever tried to do that? When I studied this text, I put the vicar on the spot and asked him to define “the glory of God.” He gave a few answers, then settled on the ideal Sunday School answer: “Jesus.” He too knew that it's hard to be wrong with an answer like that. And it is a good answer. Jesus is how we understand the glory of God. Jesus is why we give glory to God. Jesus is the way we see the glory of God, and the highlight of the glory of God. But maybe this concept needs a little more explanation, because today in our text, Paul tells us that this glory of God is really our purpose in life. That's why we are here – to bring glory to God. **“Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”**

Understand what He is saying: **Understand your purpose – the glory of God.** And as we talk about our purpose in shining the glory of God, and we think of all of these end-of-life issues we are encouraged to **Let that glory of God shine in how we view death.** And we are encouraged to **Let that glory shine in how we use our life.**

Outline Thoughts:

Live life to the glory of God

When ours is more than we understand When
our loved one's is less than we'd like

Understand Your Purpose – the Glory of God

Let It Shine in Your View of Death Let
It Shine in Your Use of Life