

## Dual Citizens: 1 Peter 4:7-11, 1/27/19

Are there any of us who live by this meme? **Just do it...later** Why do today what you can put off until tomorrow? Maybe some of us think our spiritual gift is procrastination. In doing so, we of course, always assume that tomorrow will come, but if we are honest, we really don't know do we? When you are young you feel like you have an infinite number of tomorrows. Remember thinking of my parents when they were my age and thinking, they were really old. Like the boy who said to his Grampa, "Grampa, where you on the ark?" Grampa says, "Of course I wasn't on the ark." But the little boy still couldn't get it so he asked? "So why didn't you drown?" Truth is, one day will come and we will have no more tomorrows left and we do not know when that will be. Bible says- Life is a mist, like dew in the morning. Days I look blurry eyed raising kids, people whose kids are grown, say the days are long but the years are short...it goes by so quickly. As you hear me say often, life is short, eternity is long. **How would you live if you had no more tomorrows?** Before we jump to our bucket list, if you are a Christian you don't have to guess because Peter is going to tell us God's will for us if we live like there is no tomorrow.

### 1 Peter 4:7-11

***<sup>7</sup>The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind in prayer.<sup>8</sup> Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's manifold grace.***

***<sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.***

Now there is a problem with this statement in the way we read it. **The end of all things is near**...but this was written 2000 years ago and we are still here. In fact, all the apostles write like this. In fact the later chapter of the last book in the Bible, Jesus' last words are- "Yes, I am coming soon." Well how soon is soon?

Voyage of the Dawn Treader- Conversation between Lucy and Aslan

Aslan says- Lucy, don't look so sad. We will meet soon again.

Lucy- Please Aslan, what do you mean by soon?

Aslan- I call all times soon.

God stands outside of time, and a 1000 years is like a day to God the Bible says. The Bible also speaks of what we call the imminent return of Christ, that Christ could return at any moment. There is nothing else that is required for him to return. In fact, he could return before I am done preaching this message. And says we should live with the reality that today could be our last day. And it was precisely because the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians lived this way that they turned the world upside down. So in light of the imminent return of Christ, and the fact that none of us know how long we have left on earth, how should we live?

### Three Ways Dual Citizens Live like there is no Tomorrow

1. Pray Urgently
2. Love Intensely
3. Serve Faithfully

#### 1. Pray Urgently

*<sup>7</sup>The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind in prayer.*

As your tomorrows become fewer, your prayers should become more rigorous. Most students either just finished or are heading into mid-terms. Nathan our 6<sup>th</sup> grader experienced his first year of mid-terms...and in preparing for the mid-terms I think I experienced some PTSD, flashing back to those moments. The closer the tests come, the more rigorous your studying...or cramming. Urgency increases productivity. This is counter-intuitive.

Sadly, for most of us, we don't treat prayer as if there is urgency. An urgency for the lost and the broken and the sick. An urgency in the spiritual battles of to hold onto faith. The reason is simple, we believe that tomorrow will certainly come and that we can control it. Prayer or lack of prayer reveals who we really think is in control. So pray like there is no tomorrow.

#### 2. Love Intensely

*<sup>8</sup>Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup>Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

Deeper- word means strenuously, Intense- like a horse in full gallop. This kind of perseverance and stretching of ourselves is the image in mind. There is nothing easy or casual about this kind of love. He gives two pictures of intense love that I find helpful.

**Love covers**- Prov. 10:12- hatred stirs up strife, but love will cover all sins. What does this mean? It is not, "Love covers up sin." As if we turn a blind eye, or try to hide it, deny it. It is not loving to cover up for an abuser for example, or cover for a friend who is having an affair. Or letting a friend cheat off your test and covering for them.

To help explain the sense of this phrase let me illustrate it this way. **(Picture) Have you ever wondered what that red stuff is that planes drop on California wild fires?** It's called Slurry...no not a slurpy, although it looks like one. It is a mixture of water, phosphorous, nitrogen and other fertilizers. When dropped, not only does it help extinguish the flames, it helps the water not to evaporate due to the intense heat. It coats trees and vegetation to protect it from burning, and it also helps to fertilize the ground to promote new growth from the ashes.

Intense Love is like spiritual slurry to sin. Someone mistreats you or offends you or gossips or grumbles... love doesn't pour gasoline on it. It doesn't hit back, or infect others. It extinguishes, it protects yourself and others from further damage, and it helps restore. Are you more like gasoline or slurry?

The other picture intense is hospitality. Hospitality- “Loving the stranger”

This was especially vital for the early church. Met in homes. And there were no Four Seasons or Marriotts. In many places around the world, especially the middle east, Hospitality is a vital aspect of their culture. In Albania they have a saying. An Albanian home belongs to God and His Guests. We have much to we can learn can't we? Often we treat our homes more like a fortress than a guest house...And some churches treat their building like a fortress more than a guest house.

Hospitality is a call to widen your circle. To be eager to invite new people into your life and see how you can love them and make them feel welcome. And to do that without grumbling it says. Without Grumbling- Gongysmos- Gong-Goos-Mos...onomatopoeia- word that sounds like its name. In other words, it should not be something that is forced but something we willingly do. After all, we were once wandering strangers but Jesus Christ widened the circle. He invited us in, and he adopted us as his children, so we should be the most hospitable people on earth!

We strive to be a welcoming church from the parking lot to the pew, that is a guest house...and shows that we are excited to have you and get to know you, a church that widens the circle and doesn't only talk to people we already know in the lobby. A people who greet one another without being told to. Interestingly, in a recent comprehensive study, we found, quite to our surprise that 7 of 10 regular attenders and 9 out of 10 newcomers did not like the church greeting time. Some because they are introverted and that is scary, but for many it was because it felt forced. After all, they has 5 minutes before and after the service to greet me, but they only do it when the pastor tells them too. This is why we made the decision to no longer do the obligatory greeting time. But not because we don't want to be hospitable and welcoming, but the opposite! We want to create a culture where it is the practice of all of us to greet when we come to sit down or before we leave to make it a point to get to know someone you may not know and let them know how glad you are that they are here. Are you widening your circle?

### 3. Serve Faithfully

*<sup>10</sup> Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's manifold grace.<sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

### 5 Truths about Spiritual Gifts

1. Every Christian has at least one gift
2. There are different gifts for different people
3. Your gift should be used to serve other people
4. Some gifts are more upfront and public, some are behind the scenes but all are important
5. The reason we share our gifts is for God's glory, not ours.

Notice what the grace of God is called- Manifold... how often do you use that word? Unless you work on cars. It means many colored. Used to describe a garment. Here's the point. God's grace

in the church of Christ is like a prism that shines the colors of the rainbow. You shine God's grace out from one person you get blue or green... God's grace isn't monochromatic. Wow, what a beautiful array!

Every gift, every unique way that each of us are wired is needed! We have a saying around here. **We strive for a 100% spiritual employment rate in the church.** Everyone is needed, whether you think you have a lot or a little to give. Even if you think what you can do to serve is insignificant.

Ex: When Ronald Reagan was shot and in the hospital, things kept going, the government went on doing its thing. Arguably the most powerful man in the world.

Five years later in Philadelphia, the city garbage collectors went on strike and the trash was so bad, the mayor said that if it would have gone on one more week it would have shut down the city. There are incredible photos online of this like **this one outside of the old Vet Stadium.**

Who is more important? President or the people who collect the garbage. Answer is both! They just have a different function. Bob and Janet McQuale come in midweek and faithfully refill the pew racks and sharpen pencils. Henry Sancken who directs the traffic. Or Media Team who do the slides, People changing diapers or decorating... All displaying the beautiful colors of Christ!

**Faithfully stewarding God's manifold grace.** The gift comes from God to you, and then to you to someone else. It is not for you...you are just a steward so that God's grace is on display through you. When you serve people today you represent the grace of Jesus in their lives. How will people see Jesus today? The answer is through you!

WWII- French village bombed. Had a very important statue, known throughout the country of Jesus Christ. The statue was broken into pieces. The towns people stored the statue until the war was over and then restored the statue in the town square. Only one problem, they couldn't find the hands. One day, someone put a plaque under the statue that says, he has no hands but ours. That's the concept...we are the expression of Jesus Christ. If we don't, that aspect of God's glory is marred. The gift comes from God to you, and then to you to someone else. Is that flow stopped? Have you ever taken the time to discover this? You know how you find out your gifts? By serving with your hands NOT sitting on your hands.

Now so many of you serve faithfully, and not all inside official roles in the church. But I do want to stop and recognize all those who serve in a ministry of the church. If that is you please stand so we can say thank you!

Connection card.

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2. Love Intensely

### 3. Serve Faithfully

In light of Gospel. That we have been born again into a living hope, that we will inherit eternity as a citizen of heaven, that we are loved unconditionally through Jesus Christ who died in our place. That there is nothing we can add to our salvation, he has done it, In light of the fact that that are to shine like a lighthouse in before a watching world who needs hope. And in light of the fact that life is short and eternity is long.... **Will you give more for Christ or less for Christ?** Which will be your anthem? Will you say, I have plenty of tomorrows...so I'll just do it later. Will you say I'm getting older and I'm retired, I've put in my time so "Less for Christ." Don't waste your life!