



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Third Sunday after the Epiphany (January 24, 2021)

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Focus: *Time is Short*

word of life

“For the present form of this world is passing away.” (1 Corinthians 7:31b NRSV)

Read 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Consider the time needed for glaciers to carve river valleys, mountains to be uplifted, or dinosaurs to become extinct. And consider the age of the earth or the history of the world. In doing so, it is easy to feel our time on this earth is quite short.

Followers of Christ who lived in the first century after his resurrection were confident Christ would return in their lifetime. They believed his return would bring the end of earth as people knew it. Thus, they lived their lives with an acute awareness that their time on earth was short – shorter than any other generation. This world view prompted practical questions about the end of time.

1. *Does your life on this earth seem long or short to you? Explain your answer.*
2. *How often do you ponder the end of time?*

This section of scripture is part of a larger section (chapters 7:1-10:33) dealing with questions from the Corinthian community. Paul is willing to address all issues facing the church of Corinth – no matter how challenging or controversial. Because the Corinthians thought the end was near, there is an immediacy which underscores their questions.

In particular, the Christians in Corinth were uncertain if they should change their marital status in light of the anticipated return of Christ. If the end of time is near, should people who are single stay single? Should married people get divorced or stay married? Can a person more faithfully serve Christ being single or married?

3. *When is the last time you pondered your marital status because of a concern about the end of time and the second coming of Christ?*
4. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of being single (or married) and serving Christ?*

Paul’s answer found in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 has a certain rhetorical rhythm, but the content may be puzzling, even troubling. He turns things upside down as he expands from discussing marriage to other aspects of life.

- Husbands, act as if you have no wives
- Mourners, act as if you not in mourning
- Those who rejoice, act as if there is no joy
- Buyers, act as if there is nothing to buy
- Dealers, act as if there are no deals

Paul recommends living with a full expectation of the end to come soon. Don’t get overly attached and invested in your current situation so that you miss God bringing the world to an end. Live expectantly; don’t focus on things that are not of God. “For the present form of this world is passing away.” (1 Corinthians 7:31b)

5. *Two thousand years have passed since Paul wrote these words. What might his message be for our generation?*

word among us

Sometimes we in the church can get involved with discussions on topics we don't know much about. God has simply not filled in the details. But we yearn to have things sorted out in a concrete plan. We want to know how the story ends. When will God bring this world to an end? Since the time of Christ, it has been a challenge to live our lives and make decisions with only partial insight to the big picture.

People in the Corinthian church were concerned about maintaining their marital status. Today, Christians might ask Paul if it is worth investing in the stock market or planting acorns. Will we see a return in our investment? Will we get to sit in the shade under the tree that grew from the acorn we planted?

1. *Can you relate to the concerns of the Corinthians over their marital state? How so?*
2. *What similar questions would you ask of Paul?*

Paul turns things upside down in this confusing passage. To a certain extent, he encourages people to learn to live a *short life*. For Paul that means focusing not on the details of this life and the immediate crisis of the day, but on God at work in their midst. His advice: Get a perspective on life – God's perspective. See the big picture.

3. *How would you summarize Paul's message?*
4. *What of his message is relevant for us to hear today in these times?*
5. *Do you think Paul wants everyone to join a monastery? Explain your answer.*

faith practice in daily life

Live Among God's People

We can get caught in the hustle and bustle of life, racing through our life, convinced we get to live on this earth forever. Paul reminds us, "For the present form of this world is passing away." (1 Corinthians 7:31b) This world is not permanent. Our lives are transient. Simply put, life is short. We do not know when Christ will come again.

6. *How might Paul's words impact our daily life?*

Some things like death, illness, poverty, and pain need to pass away – and pass away quickly. The good news is that God is doing something new, for the present reality will pass away. We don't know when, so we live our lives expectantly.

7. *What things would you like to see pass away?*
8. *Imagine what comes next after this world passes away.*

In baptism, we are brought into God's family and sealed with the Holy Spirit. God promises something to us better than the best of this world. For that we give God thanks and praise.

Prayer

Lord, stir us from our complacency. Allow us to seize each opportunity of our lives to serve you and reflect your glory. Amen

last word

Take time to breath each day.
Look around and really see.
Smell the goodness of creation.