

Nothing Else Matters

I Corinthians 2:1-2; 3:11-15

I am grateful for the 5½ years that I have been on staff here at The Church of the Covenant. It came about when a time of healing and provision was in order and this church has played a huge role in that process.

We all have experienced times when one thing seems to dominate our attention and for a time it is all that matters. That can happen during a health crisis, job loss or transition, loss of a family member or friend or any number of things. My youngest son, Austyn was about eight years old when he was next door playing with the neighbor's boy and I was in our back yard doing some work. I heard a paintball gun go off and a second later a blood-curdling scream from Austyn. Immediately, nothing else mattered except getting to him. I hurdled a fence and ran toward the tent in which they were playing and was ready to tear it out of the ground in its entirety if I met any resistance in opening it! It opened fast and I went in to see a huge blob of paint on my son's shirt. Upon lifting it up he had a red welt that covered a good bit of his little ribcage. At that point the rest of the world disappeared. At that point nothing else mattered.

The problem many in our culture have today is that everything matters! Our family matters, our job matters, our home matters, our cars matter, our school matters, our money matters, our shopping matters, our entertainment matters, our kids' activities matter, video games matter. It all matters! We juggle and schedule and fit more into our already crowded lives. Too often the casualty of all of that "stuff" is our relationship with God. If we don't work we don't get paid, if we don't study we get bad grades, if we don't practice we don't play. If we ignore God, what happens? Anything? The Kingdom is compromised and maybe even eternity is impacted, but who feels that? We spend virtually all of our time preparing and living for less than a century of life and so little time preparing for the billions of years to follow.

If this rope represents our eternal life and this small part is our life here on Earth, why are we spending so much time on preparing for the short lifetime here and very little preparing for eternity?

Maybe some of you need to reexamine certain activities in your lives and in your kids' lives. What would that be? It's not my call. You need to seek the mind and heart of the Lord on this one.

We just celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, a time that changed everything and ultimately led to the founding of our nation. To those reformers we owe a huge

debt of gratitude. To them nothing else mattered except following Jesus and obeying His call on their lives. That call was very costly to many of them and we are the beneficiaries of their sacrifices.

The world is on fire. The Doomsday Clock is set to 2½ minutes to midnight. That's the closest it's been since 1953. North Korea is a significant threat. Mass shootings like Las Vegas are increasing in frequency. We are short on time. There is no time for a tepid Churchianity. I cannot settle for "whatever" in my life.

The world is crying for men and women that are entirely devoted to the cause of Christ. It'll be costly to follow Jesus, but it's investing in eternity, not just our short lives here. Several Scriptures illustrate what this means:

Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Romans 12:1: Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple."

Matthew 16:24: Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

What do they all have in common? It's all about dying to yourself. That is totally out of line with not only our modern culture, but also out of line with human nature. That is why it is so difficult. That is why Jesus promises an amazing life to those who go there. You must die to yourself in order to really know what it means to have the life of Christ dwell in you to the fullest.

I'm learning what it means to die to myself and live for Christ. I'm undergoing a transformation. With the help of God and an amazing gift from God in the form of a supportive wife I...no, we are being prepared for a phenomenal journey into the work He has for us. We're not totally sure what that will look like, but it will be about building and advancing His Kingdom.

This is not just for Jane and I. It's for all of you! God wants to transform your life into something that will impact eternity. Is it radical? Yes, but there's no possible way to be too committed to Jesus, because nothing else matters!

Amen.