

LIVE FOR TODAY
Psalm 118:24

INTRODUCTION:

Well, this is it. After sixteen months of planning specific to this revival, we start tonight. Darryl Bolen has prepared his messages. Anita Newlin has prepared her song services. Our secretary has prepared the publicity. Our Sunday School classes have prepared for meals to feed the revival team.

Have you prepared yourself? The challenge: "Let every heart prepare Him room..." applies more than one time a year. Have you prepared Him room in your schedule and in your heart? I certainly hope so. If you have, you will receive a powerful blessing this week.

Fall is and always has been my favorite season of the year. For me, it evokes memories of marching band, of football games, of frosty mornings and clear, crisp nights.

And most particularly, the autumn weather calls to mind the harvest. When you live on a farm or in a farming community, it's all about the harvest. All the work of preparing the soil, planting the seed, maintaining the machinery, it all is for one purpose and that's the harvest. It's all about the harvest. Having lived on a farm and in farming communities, I sensed the excitement of the harvest and it is just one more reason that I love the fall.

It seems like this year, more than most I can remember, I've heard other people say that fall is their favorite time of year. The first cool snap and people were saying it in the post office, the bank and the grocery store: "This is a beautiful day. I just love this weather. Fall is my favorite time of year."

It calls to mind the words of Psalm 118:24

*²⁴This is the day the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

When the sun is shining, the leaves are turning, the birds are singing and the kids are sleeping, it is easy to say, "This is the day that the Lord has made and I will rejoice and be glad in it." But when the storm clouds threaten, the limbs are bare, the songs are stilled and the children are not, it is still the day that the Lord has made. Will you rejoice? Can you be glad in it? To do so requires a certain recognition, a certain resolve...and to do so brings a certain reward.

I. THERE IS A CERTAIN RECOGNITION

Occasionally, people will complain to me about the weather and then say, "Hey, you work for Him. Talk to Him about the weather." And I will reply, "I'm in sales, not management." I don't have any control over the weather...and you don't either.

I don't really mind that I don't have control over the weather because I'm pretty sure that if I did, I'd mess things up real bad. REAL BAD! No one can please everybody and if word got out that I was responsible for the weather, my life would be miserable. Every farmer, every builder, every roughneck and roustabout would be all over me about how I didn't give them the weather they wanted. Every golfer, every fisherman, every baseball, football or soccer fan would be complaining to me about how the rain affected their favorite team. You'd all be griping at me about the weather.

You know how I know that? Because we all gripe to God about the weather. It's too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry, we're always telling God that He's not doing a good job of His job. And if God, Who is perfect, can't please you, I know I can't either.

If you want to begin to live a happier life, you need to begin with a certain recognition that says, "This is the day that the Lord has made." I didn't order it off of a menu or choose it off of a showroom floor. I don't create it or control it. I can't make it or modify it. What it is, is what it is. And what it is, is exactly what God has allowed it to be.

I want to challenge you to try something. Every day, before you get out of bed, try acknowledging to God what you know to be true: that this day, whatever it brings, is the day that the Lord has made. Will you do that? While you are still snuggled under the covers and before your feet hit the floor, will you just say to the Lord something like this: Father, no matter what today brings, I know that this is the day that you have made. And I not only recognize that, I also resolve to rejoice and be glad in it.

II. THERE IS A CERTAIN RESOLVE

You see, there's not only a recognition, there is a resolve. I can't control the weather but I won't let the weather control me.

Isn't it something how we allow our moods to be so affected by the weather? If it is overcast, we feel down. When it's rainy, we feel miserable. But when the sun is shining, we feel better.

Why, it has even crept into our vocabulary. "Gloomy" can refer to weather or our mood. "Sunny" can refer to weather or our outlook. Ever know anyone who walked around "in a fog"?

We can't control the weather but we can resolve that the weather can't control us. To live for today involves a certain resolve to live above the mercy of circumstances that we can't control.

I want to read to you a pretty amazing story. It comes from a book with the title: Attitude is Everything and the book is by Francie Baltazar Schwartz.

Jerry was the kind of guy you love to hate. He was always in a good mood and always had something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!"

He was a unique manager because he had several waiters who had followed him around from restaurant to restaurant. The reason the waiters followed Jerry was because of his attitude. He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Jerry was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation.

Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Jerry and asked him, "I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?"

Jerry replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, Jerry, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood.' I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life."

"Yeah, right, it's not that easy," I protested.

"Yes it is," Jerry said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line—It's your choice how you live life."

I reflected on what Jerry said. Soon thereafter, I left the restaurant industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it.

Several years later, I heard that Jerry did something you are never supposed to do in a restaurant business—he left the back door open one morning and was held up at gun point by three armed robbers. While trying to open the safe, his hand, shaking from nervousness, slipped off the combination. The robbers panicked and shot him. Luckily, Jerry was found relatively quickly and rushed to the local trauma center. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Jerry was released from the hospital with fragments of the bullets still in his body.

I saw Jerry about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied, "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Wanna see my scars?"

I declined to see his wounds, but did ask him what had gone through his mind as the robbery took place. "The first thing that went through my mind was that I should have locked the back door," Jerry replied. "Then, as I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices—I could choose to live, or I could choose to die. I chose to live.

"Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?" I asked. Jerry continued, "The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the emergency room and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read, 'He's a dead man.' I knew I needed to take action."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Well, there was a big, burly nurse shouting questions at me," said Jerry. "She asked if I was allergic to anything. 'Yes,' I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, 'Bullets!' Over their laughter, I told them, 'I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.'"

Jerry lived thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything.

Hey, I want to tell you something, attitude IS everything and you get to choose your attitude. And there are some folk in this room who need to resolve to change their attitude. Bad things have happened to you and I know that. The life you are living right now is not the life you always dreamed of. Maybe you are living with the consequences of some dumb

choices. Maybe you are living with disability; or bereavement; or some other loss. Maybe your days bring financial stress or family stress. I suspect that for everyone here, your life is not all you would want it to be.

But are you willing to acknowledge that you can't control everything that happens to you? When you come to that recognition, then you can make a firm resolve that you will rejoice and be glad in whatever day you now find yourself. You may not be able to control your situation but you can control your response to your situation.

III. **THERE IS A CERTAIN REWARD**

You may not be familiar with the name Ella Wheeler Wilcox but I'll bet you are familiar with something she has written. Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote the poem "Solitude," which was first published in the Feb. 25, 1883, issue of the New York Sun. You know that poem, don't you? You think you don't? I'll bet you know the opening lines:

*Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone.
For the sad old earth must borrow it's mirth,
But has trouble enough of it's own.
Sing, and the hills will answer;
Sigh, it is lost on the air.
The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
But shrink from voicing care.*

*Rejoice, and men will seek you;
Grieve, and they turn and go.
They want full measure of all your pleasure,
But they do not need your woe.
Be glad, and your friends are many;
Be sad, and you lose them all.
There are none to decline your nectared wine,
But alone you must drink life's gall.*

*Feast, and your halls are crowded;
Fast, and the world goes by.
Succeed and give, and it helps you live,
But no man can help you die.
There is room in the halls of pleasure
For a long and lordly train,
But one by one we must all file on
Through the narrow aisles of pain.*

"Laugh and the world laughs with you...weep and you weep alone." I knew you had heard those lines before. You can choose to use those

words to energize your recovery or to fuel you pity party. It's your choice. But you do have a choice.

If you decide to recognize that whatever has come into your life, it is what God has allowed in this day that He has made; and if you resolve to rejoice in whatever the day brings, you will experience the rewards of improved health, increased joy and a widening circle of friends.

CONCLUSION:

During our revival, which starts this evening, Darryl Bolen will be exploring the theme, "One Month To Live". If you were to suddenly learn that you only have a month left on this earth, I hope you would not decide to live it as if you had already died. I hope you would decide to live each moment to the full and to invest each moment in memories that your loved ones can treasure.

Why wait until you know you are dying to decide to start living?
Recognize that each day is a gift from God and resolve to make the most of it.

It is rude to receive a gift and then say, "Thanks for the gift but I really wanted a..." That would be immature and impolite. We are often immature and impolite toward God because we do not resolve to rejoice in the day that He has made and has given to us. It is His desire for us to receive each day as a gift to be enjoyed from Him and employed for Him until we are at home with Him.

INVITATION: #566 – *"I Am Resolved"*