

LIVE FOR TOMORROW **I Corinthians 4:2**

INTRODUCTION:

For the month of October, our emphasis has been on how God would have us to live out our days in this life. The theme for our Revival was “One Month To Live” and Darryl Bolen challenged us to think about how we would spend the last 30 days of our lives if we knew we only had one month to live. It was a stimulating, a provocative and inspiring revival: one of the best with which I’ve ever been associated.

We ought not to wait until we know we are dying to really start living. We ought to live each day to the fullest starting right now.

A couple of weeks ago, I challenged you to live for success and make your life count for the Lord. Last week, I urged you to live for today and recognize that this is the day that the Lord has made, whatever it is like, and that we ought to rejoice and be glad in it.

But having encouraged you to live for today, I do not want you to misunderstand that and think that this means you should not think about tomorrow. In fact, you should not just think about tomorrow, you should live for tomorrow.

Proverbs 13:22 says, “*A good man leaves an inheritance for his children’s children.*” That takes foresight and planning and thinking about tomorrow.

Proverbs 20:4 tells us, “*A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.*” Planting is always an act of faith with a view to the future.

In fact, in the book of Proverbs, Solomon had a lot to say about the lazy sluggard who does not work for tomorrow’s wage. And he has a lot to say about the wisdom of the person who prepares for the future.

It is a matter of wisdom and prudence to consider what effect today’s actions will have on tomorrow. It is a matter of wisdom and prudence to reflect on how our decision will impact our children and our children’s children.

The message I want to convey this morning is that, as servants of God, we have a solemn responsibility to be good custodians of the earth that He has entrusted into our care. There is a word for that...it is “stewardship”.

Most frequently, when you hear a sermon about stewardship, it is really about giving. But not today. Today I want to talk about stewardship as our responsibility to properly administer the resources God has given us to manage. And to guide our thoughts, I want to focus on Paul's words in I Corinthians 4:2 where he writes: "² Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."

From that text, I learn these important facts:

I. We Have a Master to Serve

By definition, stewards are servants. A steward is not the master but he has a master. And the steward's responsibility is to serve his master. The master is in charge. That goes with the territory when one is a steward.

The steward is a lot like the manager of a business. He is not the owner but he manages the enterprise on behalf of the owner and for the benefit of the owner.

One of the principles we must grasp if we are going to live for tomorrow is that we do not own anything; we only keep it in trust for the Master who owns it all.

Psalm 24:1 reads: "*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*"

This planet: it is His. The air: it is His. The water: it is His. The soil: it is His. How do you think He feels about the way we are taking care of His earth? How do you think He feels about the way we are using His world? How do you think He feels about the way we are treating "all who live in it"?

I would not presume to speak for God and assert with confidence how He feels about our stewardship of the planet. But I would not be surprised to learn that we have broken His great heart and brought tears to His loving eye.

You see, we have a Master to serve and we ought never to forget that He is the Master who owns it all and when our time on earth is over, as Ecclesiastes 12:7 puts it, "*the dust returns to the ground it came from and the spirit returns to God who gave it.*" And when our spirit returns to God, we take nothing from this world with us. Nothing. Not anything. Because none of it was ever really ours, it was only on loan from the Master Whom we serve.

We have a Master to serve and we have a trust to manage.

II. We Have a Trust to Manage

Genesis chapters one and two tell us a lot about the trust that we have been given. Will you listen to these words from Genesis 1:26-30?

²⁶ *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

²⁷ *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

²⁸ *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

²⁹ *Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.*

And then these words from Genesis 2:15

¹⁵ *The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

In those verses, Moses recorded some of our Master's intentions for His stewards. In Genesis 1:26 the word that the NIV terms "rule over", most translations render, "have dominion over". Theologians have coined the phrase "dominion mandate" to describe our responsibility with reference to God's creation. Nancy Percy, in her book *Total Truth* summarizes the dominion mandate this way:

In Genesis, God gives what we might call the first job description: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it." The first phrase, "be fruitful and multiply" means to develop the social world: build families, churches, schools, cities, governments, laws. The second phrase, "subdue the earth," means to harness the natural world: plant crops, build bridges, design computers, compose music. This passage is sometimes called the Cultural Mandate because it tells us that our original purpose was to create cultures, build civilizations-nothing less.

With reference to the Garden of Eden, God intended for Adam, "to work it and take care of it."

It is not taking care of the world when we abuse it in such a way that our children and our children's children will spend their lives cleaning up the mess we've made.

Christians, recognizing that they are stewards of the planet on which we've been placed, must live for tomorrow. We must consider our actions, our choices and our lifestyle to see if we are being responsible in the way we are managing the trust the Lord has given us. And I want to get very practical here.

- There is something totally incongruous about driving behind a car that has a "honk if you love Jesus" bumper sticker and seeing the occupant throw a Big Mac wrapper out of the window. Christians ought not to litter because that is not good stewardship of the planet.
- I believe Christians ought to recycle. I know it isn't very convenient but everything we can keep out of the landfills and everything we can reuse helps to preserve the planet over which we have been given a trust.
 - In that regard, may I remind you that our youth have been recycling aluminum cans for years? They aren't making a lot of money off of those cans right now but they are preserving the planet. But they need your help. Bring your aluminum cans by the church and help our youth in their conservation effort.
 - Did you know that the students at CCHS are collecting unwanted cell phones, unwanted laptop computers, hand-held videogames and other electronic devices for recycling? This keeps toxic metals and plastics out of the landfills and, ultimately, keeps some of those toxins out of the groundwater. Don't just throw those things in the garbage, take your electronic devices by the school for recycling.
 - Do you recall that our city is recycling? Paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, aluminum can all be taken to the alley east of the village maintenance building across from the firehouse and can be put in the recycling bins there.
- I believe Christians ought to be the most ecological people on earth. We ought to shut off the lights and turn off the water and conserve gasoline and make every other effort we can to reduce our environmental impact on the earth.
- Christian farmers ought to be the wisest and most responsible people in their conservation of the soil and in their careful use of agricultural chemicals. The overuse and irresponsible use of some agricultural chemicals has led to the pollution of groundwater in some areas. Christian farmers ought to avoid that because they recognize that they are stewards and the Master has given them a trust.
- Christian farmers ought to do everything they can to prevent erosion of the soil they till. It is not only responsible stewardship of the soil, it is good business practice.

We have a trust to manage and in all those every day choices we make, we need to ask ourselves what impact our decisions will have on the earth. Christians, recognizing that they are stewards of the planet on which we've been placed, must live for tomorrow. We have no choice. It is not optional. It is a requirement.

III. **We Have a Requirement to Be Faithful**

And that really does bring me to my third observation. We have a Master to serve. We have a trust to manage. And we have a requirement to be faithful.

I want to remind you again of Paul's words in I Corinthians 4:2 ² *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*"

Paul did not say it is *advisable that* those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. He did not say it is *suggested that...* or that it is *preferable that...* or that it is *recommended that* those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. He said, "*Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*" The dominion mandate is a mandate. It is an order. It is a command.

As I read before, Ecclesiastes 12:7 says, "*The dust returns to the ground it came from and the spirit returns to God who gave it.*" And when our bodies have returned to the dust from whence they came and when our spirit returns to the God who gave it, we will be evaluated with reference to our stewardship of the trust that God has assigned to us.

Jesus' own description of that day is that the Master will settle accounts with His servants. To those who were responsible in their use of that which was entrusted to them, He will say, "*Well done good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!*" But to those who have been irresponsible in their use of that which was entrusted to them, He will say, "*You wicked, lazy servant!...*" And the Master will direct the other servants to "*throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"

You may be asking, "Darrel, are you serious? Do you really think that our use of the environment is that important?" And I reply, "We are stewards of the earth with a mandate to take care of it. And '*it is **required** of a steward that he must **prove faithful.***'" To live for tomorrow is to be a good and faithful steward of all of the resources over which we have been made stewards.

CONCLUSION:

The United States Marine Corps adopted the motto *Semper Fidelis* in 1883, on the initiative of Colonel Charles McCawley, the 8th Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Semper Fidelis* is a Latin phrase that translates as "Always Faithful". "*Semper Fidelis*" signifies the dedication and loyalty that individual Marines have for "Corps and Country", even after leaving service.

"Forever Faithful" is a descriptor that ought not to be restricted the United States Marine Corps. Every Christian should be known as ever faithful because: "*It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*"

INVITATION: #597 – "*Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated*"