

Acts 17:30,31

Dear Friends in Christ,

We don't have caller I.D. because we're old and backwards. Besides, you can have some fun with this and even if you have caller I.D. you still have to go through the process of screening your calls. Consequently, when the phone rings at the parsonage most of the time I answer with the usual, "Hello." If the person asks, "Is this Mr. Abbott?" I hang up. If it takes a moment for someone to respond, or if there's background noise, or if somebody just starts blabbing, I hang up. If the person asks, "Is this Mr. A-boat?", or something along that line, I hang up. Every now and then I'm exceedingly polite and wait for a voice, and, every now and then, I'm glad I did. The voice will say something like, "This is to remind you of your appointment with ..." and, of course, it's always one my doctors.

I have described life as a series of good-byes. In another sense, life could be described as a series of appointments which precede the good-byes. Such is the direction of the sermon this morning. It's God's call from the Scripture . . .

THIS IS TO REMIND YOU OF YOUR APPOINTMENT WITH GOD

I. God Has An Appointed Day.

I've never forgotten the day I walked into a hospital room and a mother was holding her newborn baby. The child had died. I've never forgotten the moment after a graveside service when my son and I saw a tombstone with the engraving "Baby Boy" and under that the year. That's all. "Baby Boy" and year. Neither pastor ever really walks away from, forgets about, becomes complacent about the brothers and sisters, the moms and dads, the children, the grandparents whose funerals we have been privileged to conduct.

One thing for sure: There is an appointed day for every human. As Solomon said: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die." (Eccl. 3:1,2a) A time.

In our text the Holy Spirit says through the Apostle Paul:

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed (that's Jesus); and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

The statement, "The times of ignorance God overlooked...", simply means that God did not punish them to the degree their idolatry merited, but He will fully punish them on the Day of Judgment. The 31st verse says: "He has fixed a day on which he will judge the world...". The day is "fixed" - has been appointed by God. Backing up to the 26th verse of Acts 17, we are given these words: "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place." So much for man's arrogance and the thinking we control our destinies.

All this is reminiscent of this Word of God: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son..." (Gal. 4:4) The fullness of time - an appointed time. And we can't ignore David's words, "in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me (let's also say, "appointed") when as yet there was none of them." (Ps. 139:16)

But I've always found these words of Job some of the most stunning: "Since (a man's) days are determined (appointed), and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass..." (Job 14:5) Our life span is measured in terms of days and months. Short. Brief. Unknown but to God. We have and do of this world, but as God's people we have and do in the context of an appointed day when we will be called out. The cry that this is too negative is invalid and ridiculous. This is the Word of God! If you're a faithful student there is no hiding from it! Ever!!

II. Some Examples.

And so, the theme for the sermon. “This is to remind you of your appointment with God on...”. Obviously, the date is unknown to us. But not to God. He has set a time for each here.

Recall with me the great prophet Elisha; a faithful prophet to the end. I’ve always found these words of Scripture interesting: “Now when Elisha had fallen sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel went down to him and wept before him...”. (2 Kings 13:14) *Fallen sick with the illness of which he was to die*. He would become ill and die. God set the time. No euphemism is used here for the word “die”. He would die as all die. As Scriptures say, “The wages of sin is death...”. (Rom. 6:23a) No euphemism for “death”. It was time. It was God’s time.

Recall with me the great Apostle Paul and these words he wrote to Timothy, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure has come.” (2 Tim. 4:6) Paul didn’t live in morbid anticipation. God had revealed to Paul his departure. And Paul’s attitude? His words: “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil. 1:21) It wasn’t a loss.

Recall with me that moment after Jesus had comforted Peter with His love and forgiveness in spite of Peter’s denial, and these words of Jesus to Peter: “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.’ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.” (Jn. 21:18,19)

Perhaps we would protest: “I’m not a Prophet! I’m not an Apostle!” No, but we are God’s people. The words of Job echo everywhere: “days are determined...you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass. (Job 14:5)

III. No Better Alternative?

Throughout the years we have confronted settings where God’s people struggling with very severe situations have made this observation: “Well, it’s better than the alternative.” The severity of the situation is seen as better than entering eternal life.

There is no doubt that the flesh recoils and shudders at the reality of dying and death. However, staying on this earth indefinitely is not better than the alternative for the child of God in Christ. Jesus promises to those who know the forgiveness of sin and promise of eternal life in Him, “whoever believes will not perish.” (Jn. 3:16) He says to troubled disciples - then and now, “Let not your hearts be troubled...I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” (Jn. 14:1,3) If any of us who profess Christ actually believes that staying on this earth is preferable over being with Christ in everlasting joy...well...the need to examine knowledge and faith is imperative!

Speaking of the life after death and the resurrection of our flesh Paul writes these words that should be in front of us each day:

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own (he pushes his life not toward life here but for the life to come), because Christ Jesus has made me his own...one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:12-14)

Christ has earned our forgiveness of sin and secured eternal life for us. We have to keep that straight. It’s been said before, and it bears repeating: “The goal of life isn’t to stay alive. The goal of life is to glorify God.” Instead of shoving the Scripture off to the side or filling up on the fluff of contemporary “theology”, we need to fill our lives with God’s Word. Selected bits and pieces of the Word do not make for a healthy spiritual diet.

We've got too much of this world pulling at us. The Scriptures, which most really don't want to hear unless its perverted with promises of an earthly gold mine - the Scriptures are clear and plain: "Do not love the world or the things in the world." (I Jn. 2:15) The love is the "agape", that is, it's the love that will sacrifice everything for something, as Christ sacrificed Himself for us. The difference, of course, is that to **agape** the world is to sacrifice the spiritual - it's to gain the world, but loose the soul. In fact, the Scriptures go on to say, "For all that is in the world - **the desires of the eyes and pride of life** are not from the Father but is from the world." (I Jn 2:16)

And here's what must scream at our flesh: "And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." (I Jn. 2:17) Do you understand? *This is to remind you of your appointment with God on...the day He has set for you, as well as me. All glory be to Christ!*

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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Appointment with God On ”***

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- II. Some Examples*
- III. No Better Alternative?*

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