

The Biggest Day

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[0 : 0 0] Well, folks, let me encourage you to grab a Bible if you have one, or maybe there's one round about you, and turn to the letter of 1 Timothy as we finish it this morning as a church.

It's on page 1194 of your pew Bibles. So if you want to grab one of them, that would be fantastic. But why don't we just pray as we come to God's words today.

Heavenly Father, it's our prayer that you would open our eyes to behold wondrous things in your law, in your word.

Father, what we see not, would you help us see? What we have not, you would give us, and what we are not, you would make us. Father, we pray for your Holy Spirit's help now in Jesus' wonderful name.

Amen. Well, 1 Timothy chapter 6, in it verse 11. As you're turning there, let me ask you, what is the biggest date that's coming up on the horizon of your life?

[1 : 0 5] Have a think about it. What's the biggest date that's coming up on the horizon of your life? Remember one of our girls, when she was coming up for her second birthday, every day the week before, she'd ask me, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, is it my birthday today?

How many more days to my birthday? And I would say, it's five days, sweetheart. The next day, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, how many more days to my birthday? Four days, sweetheart.

Next day, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, how many more days to my birthday? Three days to your birthday. And by the time we'd reached two days, it was fever pitch in our house. We could hear on the monitor her singing happy birthday to herself through the monitor.

And after a while, we heard a pfft noise. Freaked us out for a little bit. Before a bit of investigation work, we realized she was practicing blowing out her candles. But we all do it, don't we? We orientate our lives around the biggest dates that are on the horizon of our lives, right?

Moving house, big day. Big day. Starting a new term at school or uni. Big day. Beginning a new job. Big day.

[2 : 1 3] The day that you retire. Big day. The day that you get married. If you get married, big day. Those days that are in our minds and we think about them for ages a long way off.

We cannot stop thinking about them. And they naturally shape how we live our lives in the present. And here's the thing that I think God would say to each one of us here today.

Whether you would call yourself a Christian, whether you would say you don't believe in this Jesus. Whoever you are here today, here is the challenge that this passage makes to each and every one of us.

Is that there's one day that's coming for all of us. One day that should be the biggest day on every single one of our radars.

And the greatest day which all the other days in our lives fall behind. So we're going to read this passage now. And I want you to think about, I want you to see if you can spot the day that Paul, who's writing this letter, is telling Timothy to think about.

[3 : 17] So we're in at verse 11. We're just going to finish the letter this morning. And what a passage for Joe on his baptism day. That's why we picked it.

I thought it would be really great to think about. So Paul writes this, But you, man of God, flee from all this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

In the sight of God who gives life to everything and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time.

God, the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and the Lord and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see, to him be honour and might forever.

[4 : 34] Amen. Command those who are rich in this present world, not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith.

Grace be with you all. Amen. I'm sure God will bless the reading of his word. So I wonder if you got the day. Did you get the day? Now here is, speak to anybody who's a Christian, and here is what they will tell you is true, that they have come to see.

That the Bible, this is what they've come to see. The Bible is a story that makes sense of life. It's God's word. That's what we believe about the Bible. It's the word of the God who created everything.

[5 : 52] It's the story that makes sense of life, because it is the story of the God who is and who gives life. You see, the Bible tells the story of this gloriously good God who created the world.

This God didn't create the world out of something. This God created the world out of nothing. The entire cosmos, the work of his loving and his powerful word.

And as the pinnacle of creation, God made human beings. Every single human being, men and women, made in his image. And why did he make them? He made them to live in relationship with him as creature, loves and enjoys and worships the creator.

It's the reason, whoever you are here today, it's the reason that God created you. It's the reason that you exist. You have been bestowed with honor and glory, because you are made in his image.

No matter how you are feeling here today, that is true, the Bible says. And God gives Adam and Eve right there, the task of, of stewarding and cultivating and filling.

[7 : 00] The world which God had made all for his glory. As the Bible story goes on, Eve makes the decision to eat the apple, the fruit that God told Adam and Eve not to eat, to show their love for him.

And sin enters the world. All of a sudden in the Bible story, you come across words like death, and strife, and anger, and murder.

Words that weren't there in the opening two chapters of the Bible, because they weren't in the human heart. And whether it's BC or whether it's AD, we know that these words, sin and its ripple effects in each of our lives, in our world, these words describe our world, don't they?

Because each of us have followed Adam and Eve's lead in rebelling against our creator. It's the essence of sin. Remember, growing up, this is how they taught us how to remember it.

Our Sunday school teachers, sorry God, I'm in charge, no to your rules. It's the heart of it, isn't it? It's this rebellion that we have, that we don't want God, we want to be on the throne of our lives.

[8 : 08] But right there, as sin enters the Bible story, God makes a promise that he is going to act to save us from sin's eternal consequences, culminating in Jesus.

Emmanuel, that name that just means God with us, his first appearing at Christmas time. We're going to start thinking about it. In fact, today's the first day of Advent, isn't it? Jesus came, Jesus lived, Jesus loved perfectly, Jesus died on the cross.

He took the punishment that we deserve on himself, the eternal separation and punishment from God that we all deserve by very nature, and that hangs over us, out with Jesus.

Jesus makes it his own, meaning that all those who put their faith in him can know forgiveness and the joy of being right with our creator.

And on the third day, Jesus rises from the dead. Jesus ascends to heaven. That's where he is right now. What is he doing? He's not twiddling his thumbs, if I can put it like that reverently.

[9 : 20] What is he doing? He is praying for his people. No matter how you're doing today, if your faith is in him, he is right there in the place of all power, interceding for you, pleading your name, right there before God the Father.

And the Holy Spirit descends, takes up residence in the hearts of believers, and ushers in this age of mission in which we are now living, the age in which we are commanded by the power of the Spirit to take the message of the risen Jesus, who he is, what he's done, and what is coming, take that message to the ends of the earth so that every human being would have the opportunity to respond to who Jesus is and have life in his name.

And so the last thing to happen in the story is that Jesus will return. And he will settle everyone's destinies according to how they have responded to him. Right at the end of the Bible story, he will destroy death.

He will wipe away tears. He will usher in this new creation where he rules as king in God's kingdom of light. And everything we've seen in our news screens this week, and we're going to be praying for this tonight, particularly thinking about those who are trying to make dangerous crossings at the minute, those who are in our world who are suffering incredibly, this Jesus will usher in a kingdom where sin and death are no more.

A place where, as Sam said to Frodo, a place where everything sad will come untrue. And that's the biggest day. Did you get it in the reading? That's the biggest day that God is telling us that every single one of us should be orientating our lives around.

[11 : 04] And it's the day that Paul, in this passage today, is telling Timothy, this young church leader in Ephesus, he's telling him to live in light of.

What he calls verse 14, the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know, I don't know, this is what I was thinking about this week. What is Paul trying to do?

Something I learned this week, I don't know if you've ever seen a horse race. Last time you saw a horse race. But if you have, you'll know what is common for jockeys to do is to put blinkers on the sides of the eyes of the horse.

Never knew this was a thing until I looked it up this week. Blinkers, and they're called blinkers, blinkers on the side of the horse's eyes. What's the thinking behind it? The thinking behind it is they want to cut out everything that's going to distract the horse.

And focus it solely on what's ahead. And I think that's exactly what Paul is doing here in this passage. Got to focus on what's ahead. And here's the challenge for all of us, I think.

[12 : 10] The challenge is, are we living in light of this king's return? Are we living our lives in the knowledge that Jesus one day is coming back?

And so in the time we have remaining, this will just be 10 or so minutes, I just want this passage, God and his word, to ask us two questions about our lives. And here's the first question.

The question is, are we pursuing the right things? Are we pursuing the right things? If you come with me to verse 11, Timothy is told, man of God, you are to flee from all this.

Now, all this is the envy, the controversies, the malicious talk, the suspicions between people, the greediness, the discontent, all the stuff that Paul has listed just before at verse four.

This is what's going on, the false teachers who are in Ephesus. This is the byproduct of their lives. This is what is happening. And Timothy has got to flee from all that. Not get caught up in it.

[13 : 16] He's not to fight fire with fire. I love that, that all this stuff's going on in the background. And Paul doesn't say, see if you, how about if there's a smear campaign going on in the church and in the city, how about you start your own little smear campaign to see if you can out them?

He doesn't say that, does he? He's not to fight fire with fire. This is not how the kingdom of God works. This is not what it is to follow Jesus. The answer, the commission that Timothy has given to guard the truth, to stand for the truth of the gospel, to put this church back in order so that it is relationally working.

The armor that Timothy has to put on, the weapons that he brings to the fight are righteousness and godliness and faith and love, endurance and gentleness.

The way of the kingdom of God is the polar opposite to the way of the kingdom of the world. Do you see that? When was the last time you heard about someone going in to fight with gentleness?

But that's exactly how it works in the kingdom of God. This is how grace works. And as we look at the list of these things, friends, we need to ask ourselves, are we pursuing these things?

[14 : 34] Are we growing in godliness? Are we pursuing endurance? Why does Timothy need to be told to endure? Because this is going to be tough and he's got to go the distance.

Are we growing in these things? I had heard somebody recently say that the things from verse 4, the envy and strife, the malicious talk, they're the things that will make the news feeds on our phones, won't they?

But we've got to understand that gentleness and godliness, those are the things that are going to pop up, if I can put it like this, on the news feed of heaven. Listen, this is the fruit of the spirit.

You don't want to see more of it in your life? I find gentle people the most encouraging people to be around, people who just ooze Jesus. And it raises the question, doesn't it, how do we run after these things?

How do you run after gentleness? How does that work? I presume that it works as you run after these things, as you pursue, as we pursue Jesus. Grow as we spend time each day in our Bibles, as we grow in the knowledge of who our God is, as we care about the truth, as we care and love one another, as we spend time in prayer.

[15 : 52] And we must understand there's a difference between legalism and discipline. Legalism, just doing these things because we want to put on the show, we think it's the right thing to do, but as of in and of themselves, they are the kind of end goal, if you like.

But discipline says, I do these things because I want to get to know God more and who he is. And that's worth the best of my attention. See, there's a difference between legalism and discipline.

Timothy is to run after these things. And so Paul says, fight the good fight of the faith, as in this is going to be hard. I love it that you never hear Jesus talking in the Gospels as if following him is going to be easy.

And I remember recently, or was it an email I got? I can't remember. The email just said, super fast broadband coming to your area. And I thought, great, join the party.

Let's go. It said on the email, it said, join the super fast revolution for as little as \$15.99 a month. And that's a pretty good deal, \$15.99 a month. And then you notice the little asterisk next to the \$15.99, don't you?

[17 : 00] And you kind of follow the rabbit trail down where it goes, and you follow it down and it says, asterisk, in addition to the line rental of \$15.99 a month. You think, all right, so it's not actually \$15.99 a month.

What I love about Jesus is that when he talks about what it is to follow him, there are no asterisks. He never hides the small print.

He talks about the narrow way. He talks about denying self. He talks about taking up cross. He talks about his disciples being sent out like lambs in the midst of wolves.

It's going to be hard to follow Jesus. But in the same way that Jesus made the good confession in front of Pontius Pilate, Timothy, this is going to be hard, but verse 15, you have got to fight the same fight of the faith because the, why did Jesus do that?

What's the Bible say? For the glory that was set before him, he endured the cross. In other words, he had the eye on who God is and what was ahead of him. Timothy used to do exactly the same. And that's why, Joe, this is such a good passage for you this morning.

[18 : 09] O man of God, pursue the things of the kingdom of heaven. You know, Timothy is reminded, verse 12, of his public confession of his love for Jesus and his desire to follow him that he made in the sight of many witnesses.

You read around it, it's just very likely that this would have just been his baptism that Paul's talking about here. The public confession that Timothy made. And it's as if Paul is saying that that love for Jesus, that desire to run hard after him that was so evident on that day, that came from your lips, that was so clear for everyone to see.

Don't drop the pace as life goes on. Don't get distracted by all the things that come at you. Do you know what? My greatest fear in life is that I will just go cold in my love for Jesus.

Just get bogged down by the cares and worries of just get distracted. And Paul says, keep your eye on what's ahead. Don't drop the pace, up the pace. Don't grow cold. Fan into flame your love for him and your desire to serve him.

And take hold of the eternal life which is ahead of you in Christ Jesus. You know, I read a stat this week that we take hold of our phone something like 2,617 times.

[19 : 19] Have you ever done it? Great thing I tried to do this week was take a little post-it note and put it on the top of my phone covering the camera that just said eternal life. Every time I picked up my phone, take hold of the eternal life.

Are we taking hold of the eternal life? That's what's ahead of us. Friends, are we pursuing the right things? And really quickly, secondly, are we investing in the right places? Because many in this church in Ephesus were being dazzled by money, just being distracted by it.

And pay careful attention to the text. It's not having the money that's the issue. It's the hope that people are putting in it that's the issue. And Paul says so lovingly, you've got to love the people in your church family by helping them see that it's so uncertain.

That's the word he uses, uncertain. I mean, know the truth of that, don't we? In our lives right now, energy companies disappearing overnight. Mine just went. Just went.

Petrol prices going up and down. I remember the days when it was 80 pence to fill up your car. Now it's what, 142? I don't know what it is. Petrol prices up and down. Found myself walking along Princes Street the other day.

[20 : 26] Couldn't believe the number of stores which are boarded up. It's so uncertain. And that's what he's saying. To build your life on money, to put your hope in it, you've got to understand it is to build your life on a pack of cards.

But what is God calling the Christian to know? That to build your life on God and who he is, is a firm foundation of your life. Firm foundation of your life.

Okay, so many people, we did this this week, came to Friday night with those storms. We had to run out to the garden and pin the trampoline to the ground. Hold it down, firm foundation. And that's what he's saying.

Is your life pinned on something that it's going to hold when the storms come against it? And he's saying, put your hope in God. And this God richly provides. And this God provides everything for our enjoyment.

Do you see it? I take it that's a direct shot at the false teachers in Ephesus who are claiming otherwise. No, no, no. Paul is saying, this is no stingy God. He didn't create the world in black and white.

[21 : 31] He created it in color. He didn't create one type of flower or food or star. He created many because this is the God. He is the source of all true joy. And the call is to use what he has given us and invest it, verse 19, in the coming age.

What does that mean? It just means invest it in the gospel. Invest it in the work of Jesus. And what would our bank balances show as the primary places where we're investing?

What would our diaries say about the things that are most important to us? Think about it. Just what do you have? What has God entrusted to you? What opportunities are in front of you?

Who can you serve? What can you do? Do you not long that Brunswick would be a community that's described here that would be rich in good deeds? That we'd be known in our community here as a people who are generous and willing to share.

And that generosity just comes, doesn't it, from the heart of our generous God. Who he is, what he's done in sending his son for us. And so are we investing in the right places?

[22 : 41] And just as we come into land today, you know, I came across a discussion thread this week on Quora.com. And the question simply said, what are the best words that you've heard in life?

What are the best words that you could hope to hear in life? The answer's from people, I'm sure you can understand them. I'm proud of you. You're hired. I love you. You can do it.

Words full of meaning. Life is full of wonderful words, but I wonder what you would answer. In the Bible, for the Christian, Jesus has given us much greater words to live for.

Much greater words to live for. We get them at the end of Matthew's Gospel. Jesus is telling this parable to his disciples, teaching them how they should live in light of his return.

And he tells this parable about some servants and about how their master gave them stuff to invest while he went away on business. And he returns and he finds out that one servant has just squandered what his master has given him.

[23 : 49] He's hid it in a hole. He hasn't done anything with it. But the other two invest it really well. And when the master returns, they're greeted with those words, well done, good and faithful servant.

Come and enter your master's joy. Who is the master? This God, the blessed and only ruler as he's described here, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the God who is immortal, the God who dwells in unapproachable light, yet the God who in Jesus we can approach confidently and know him as Father.

Jesus says to his disciples, those are the words I want you to live for. Well done, good and faithful servant. the best words on the biggest day.

Folks, as we close, are we living our lives in light of Jesus' return? Let's pray, shall we? So Heavenly Father, I ask that your spirit would be at work amongst us now, Lord.

Father, we long to be a people who live for your glory and I pray for those, Father, here today who perhaps don't know your son, the Lord Jesus. Oh Father, may today be the day when they put their trust and their faith in him as their saviour and their king.

[25 : 15] Father, thank you. Help us to be mindful of that day when Jesus will return. Father, may we live our lives in light of who he is. Help us have those words in our minds.

Well done, good and faithful servant. Father, thank you that you love us and we pray these things in Jesus' worthy name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.