

What are you Living for?

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[0 : 00] Thank you very much, everyone who's already participated in the service. If you have a Bible, keep it open at Matthew chapter 6, the passage that Esther read out to us. That would be really helpful as we look through this evening.

We're starting a new series on what it means to be a distinct disciple. But before we do that, let's just bow our heads quickly and pray to our great God. Our great God in heaven. You are the God who can hold all the dust of the world in scales. You're the God who all the nations of this world are but a drop in a bucket in comparison to you.

And yet you are the God who, like a shepherd, tenderly brings your flock to yourself. You gather your lambs in your arms and we thank you that we can be a part of that flock.

We ask that as we turn to your word, you'd challenge us, you'd encourage us, and you'd help us live for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen. So this evening, as has already been said, we're starting our short series on what it means to be a distinct disciple.

[1 : 08] So as Christians, we are different from the world around us. We have a different identity, a different citizenship, a different view of the world, and we have a different hope.

But we are not called to be distant. We are called to be distinct. And so that distinction should be seen in every area of our lives. And so this evening, the thing I want us to think about and the big question I want us to have in the back of our minds as we walk through this passage is, what are you living for?

Over the last few years, I've spent around teenagers and students, I've learned many, many wonderful new words. And some abbreviations as well, but probably the strangest one, and the one which really gives me or us an insight into the world we live in is this.

FOMO. I wonder if you've ever heard that phrase before. It means fear of missing out. And the definition is an anxiety that an exciting or interesting event may currently be happening elsewhere. Hashtag FOMO. If you're on social media, that is everywhere. So maybe you know that feeling when you're scrolling through social media and you see that all of your friends, all of your mates have checked into a restaurant and you're sitting there and you're getting anxious because you're like, what if they're having fun?

[2 : 36] And what if I'm not part of that fun? I could be missing out on a great night. Or what if you go to that job interview and you think, oh no, but what if I get that one and then this other one comes back and it's a better offer?

I'm missing out. Hashtag FOMO. Or what about those friends or family who are just about to go on holiday and they're telling you about all the wonderful places they're going to go, the lovely weather they're going to be enjoying as they sit on the beach with a book.

And you're sitting there thinking, well, I'm stuck in a boring office behind a computer all day.

Hashtag FOMO. See, this little catchphrase summarizes the state of the world that we live in and it summarizes what's driving people.

People are living for the moment. So if there is something big or interesting happening, people feel this need that they have to be there. Or else they're missing out.

And that is quickly becoming one of the biggest fears of our time. The fear of missing out. But if we only live for the moment, then we forget the bigger picture.

[3 : 43] And we forget that our actions have consequences. And so people living this kind of lifestyle will happily go out and get drunk. They'll happily go out and sleep around.

And they will do whatever their heart desires. Why? Well, because you've only got one life to live, they'll tell you. And you've got to live it to the full.

Don't miss out on any fun, people say. Just live for the moment. But as Christians, we are called to be distinct disciples. And the Bible gives us a far greater purpose for our life.

The Bible says, don't live for the moment. But it says, live wholeheartedly and sacrificially for God. And so as Christians, we are set apart by God and for God.

We are called to be holy because he is holy. And so this means that our lifestyle will be different.

We'll be distinct disciples. We'll look very different from the world around us.

[4 : 42] So what are we living for? Are we living for God or are we living for the moment? And I'm not saying that Christians should buckle down and have an attitude of simply getting through this evil, broken world.

Because we've been put here on earth for a reason. We've been given a job to do, but we are to live in light of eternity. So we aren't only to focus on eternity and completely forget about this world. But likewise, we're not only to focus on this world and completely forget about eternity. As Christians, we are called to live in this world, but we are called to live for God.

What are you living for? And the first thing that we see in this passage this evening is living for eternity. Verses 19 to 24, living for eternity.

So Matthew chapter 6, this passage is in the middle of Jesus' teaching blocks known as the Sermon on the Mount. And Jesus has just been teaching many different topics.

[5 : 51] And if his followers live according to the things he's been teaching, then they'll stand out. They'll be different from the world around them. And in these verses, Jesus is telling his disciples and the people listening into his sermon that they aren't only to focus on the here and now, but they are to store up their treasures in heaven.

Why? Well, because the things of this earth will vanish. Instead, we are to live our lives for eternity. And so Jesus starts off his teaching on how to live for eternity in verse 19 by stating some of the negative actions for his disciples.

He says, The word used there for vermin, the ESV translates it as rust.

Because the word in Greek describes a kind of consuming or an eating away of something.

Meaning that all of our treasures here on earth are slowly decaying.

They can be destroyed and they will be destroyed. The things of earth are temporary. They do not last. And we all know it.

[7 : 08] And so a few months ago, I went through to Glasgow with my mum and we were clearing out my grandpa's flat because he was just moving out. And so we boxed and we bagged 87 years worth of stuff.

Some of it was valuable. Some of it was rubbish. But all of it was temporary. We spent one day and we filled my estate car to the brim with stuff for the dump.

Why? Because our possessions are finite. They have a lifespan and they can break. And when we die, which we all will, all of our possessions, all of our titles will be gone.

Whether you are a cleaner or a king, everything will be gone. Everything is fleeting. And so Jesus is calling for a complete shift from our former way of thinking of gathering possessions, focusing on the here and now and telling us to focus on the things that really last.

Think of the implications of these verses to the original readers. The majority of whom were probably quite poor. And so their life would have been marked by living for the here and now, worrying about what they should put on the table.

[8 : 28] And we'll get to that in the second half of the passage. But here he is saying, do not put your hope in your earthly possessions. Because if we base our identity and our hope on our earthly possessions and treasures, then we're basing our lives on things that will be gone in the blink of an eye.

But it is important to note that Jesus isn't saying that we shouldn't have possessions. And that the things of this world are evil and that we should stay as far away from them as possible.

He isn't saying that as Christians we shouldn't care about this world. Because God knows us. God created this world and filled it with wonderful good gifts that point us to him.

But Jesus is saying, do not store up treasures for yourselves. We aren't to selfishly accumulate possessions for the sake of it. But we are to store up our treasures in heaven.

And people in our world today, they're living for the here and now. They're living for relationships, for money, for jobs, for houses and for fame.

[9 : 41] And those are all great, wonderful things. But I'm sure all of you have probably heard this quote by the famous actor and comedian Jim Carrey, who has a net worth of \$150 million.

And he says this, Ultimately, the treasures of this world are meaningless.

They do not give the kind of fulfillment that the world tells us they do. And so Jesus says, store up your treasures in heaven. But as I was studying this passage this week, I was thinking, well, what are these treasures?

Jesus doesn't really tell us what they are. But if we look at the rest of Matthew's gospel, and if we look at the rest of the Bible, we'll see that the treasures that we have been promised in heaven are far, far greater than anything we can have on this earth.

The primary treasure and the treasure that should take our breath away every single time we think about it is the fact that we as sinful, broken human beings get to spend an eternity in the presence of a holy, good God.

[10 : 57] Our future hope of heaven is the treasure that should make us wake up and praise God every single day because we've been chosen, as 1 Peter says, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

That we are being made more like Christ, more like Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit. And that by the obedience of Jesus Christ, we have been made right with God because he went to the cross for us.

Why did God do this? Was it because it's something we deserve? Was it because we've earned it? No. It is because of God's great mercy.

And now we have a hope. We have a treasure. We have an inheritance that can never perish, that can never spoil, and that can never fade. A treasure that is securely stored up for us in heaven through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What are you living for? I think that these treasures are also referring to the things that Christians are called to live out. To become more like Jesus.

[12 : 12] To increase in faith, love, and hope. To grow in the knowledge and love of God. To actively work to see people know Jesus by gossiping the gospel in every single day life.

And to use our money for Christian causes. Because that is the only investment that will bring everlasting fruit. So these are the treasures that are lasting.

But why are they lasting? Well because they are things that we are doing for God. And in verse 21 it says, Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Friends, this is the glorious truth of the Christian message. If you live for God, your life is secure in him for an eternity. Nothing can take that away.

There is no doubt whatsoever that God is faithful to his promises. And that he will abide with his people. But I want to warn you of the seriousness of not living for eternity.

[13 : 16] Because if we do not live for eternity. If you do not live for the things of God. And your future is not found solely on the good gift of Jesus.

Then your future is not something to be eagerly awaited. Jesus came into this world and lived the perfect obedient life that we could not live.

He died the horrible death that we deserve. And he rose again proving to the entire world. That he is God in the flesh. And he made it possible for us to be in right relationship with him.

If you reject this gift from God. The greatest gift in the world. Then you too will be rejected. Please do not live for anything but eternity.

Please do not base your identity or your hope on anything that this world has to offer. Because it is gone in a second. And Jesus expands on this comparison.

[14 : 20] In verses 22 and 23. Using the imagery of light and darkness. Now a few. I think it was last week. I walked into my bedroom at night in the evening.

And for some reason. I didn't turn on the light. And so you can imagine that it wasn't long before my foot got caught on one of Sabina's bags. And I decided to headbutt the floor. Now if I would have turned on the light like every normal person in the world.

I would have seen the bag. Stepped over it. And everything would have been fine. See if there is light. Then we can focus. Then we know where we're going.

And we know what we're doing. And the same can be said for spiritual vision. If our perspective is correctly adjusted on God and on eternity.

Then our life will be filled with purpose and determination. To live for God because he knows what is best for us. But if our vision becomes clouded by the false gods of materialism.

[15 : 22] And by the fleeting things of this world. Then we lose our sense of values. And Jesus says that your whole life is in darkness. We cannot see where we're going.

And we cannot see what we're living for. We cannot serve two masters. We cannot live in darkness and in light. Naturally we are born into darkness.

We are born as enemies of God. But God calls us from that darkness into glorious light. He gives us a new identity. A new set of priorities.

A new point of orientation. And a new meaning to life. So he calls us to make a complete shift from a former way of thinking. And instead to live in the light.

To focus on him and live for the eternal. Not the fleeting. What are you living for? We've often sung the song here at Brunsfield called.

[16 : 23] Take my life and let it be. And I wonder if when we sing that song. We actually realize what we're asking God to do. We're saying God. We are willing for you to take our lives.

Our time. Our actions. Our words. Our lips. Our money. Our will. Our hearts. Our desires. And our love. And we're giving it entirely to you. We're saying that we are surrendering ourselves completely to God.

And his plans and purposes for our lives. That is a bold thing to say. But that is exactly what it means to live for eternity. It means holding nothing back from God.

Letting him into every area of our lives. And setting our minds completely on him. Now again this doesn't mean that we focus so much on eternity.

That we don't think about this world. Or that we think everything in this world is evil. Because it isn't. And we aren't to be separate from the world. We aren't to be distant.

[17 : 27] We're to be distinct. God calls us to live in the world. To live our ordinary lives whilst rubbing shoulders with non-Christians. Why? Because then we're acting as light in the darkness.

So if we live for eternity. If we live our lives with our eyes fixed on the things of God. Then we will be distinct disciples. We'll be different.

And people will wonder why. And then we can tell of our glorious hope that is found in Jesus Christ. If you're not a Christian here this evening. And if you've never heard this before.

I hope you see the beauty of this message. Christianity is not just a belief system. Christianity is not just a crutch for the weak people of this world to get through life.

Nor is Christianity a message of empty hope based on a fairy tale story from years ago. But Christianity is the glorious message that God created this world perfectly.

[18 : 28] For humanity to enjoy together in close relationship with Him. And even though we rebelled and we rejected Him. He didn't cast us off. He didn't cut us off.

Or give up on us. But instead He set in motion His grand plan for the people to be reconciled to Him. And He sent His Son. His perfect Son. To come to earth.

To die for an undeserving people like you and like me. And so now we can spend an eternity with God in heaven. So how do we live in a world that is gripped by the fear of missing out on life?

Well we live this message out. And we point people to the true meaning of true life. The life that we were created to live. And we fix our eyes on Jesus Christ and on eternity.

The second thing that we see in this passage is don't worry about the temporary. Verses 25 to 34. Don't worry about the temporary. Jesus starts off this teaching based on things He's just said.

[19 : 44] And He's highlighting the difference between those who are living in darkness and those who are living in light. Those who are focusing on eternity. And those who are focusing on the temporary. And so Jesus is inviting His original hearers and us to listen to His wisdom.

To search our own hearts and to determine where our treasure is. Only once we have grasped the beauty of eternity and the durability of our unchanging treasure.

Can we really see the finiteness of this world. And also once we see the beauty of what it looks like and means to live for eternity. Then and only then.

We see how trusting in God. The one who has given us life. And has brought us into light. Is the best way to live. And it's actually us living out the life we were supposed to.

And so one of the big things that is coming more and more to the forefront of our society today. Is the sheer volume of anxiety. That exists.

[20 : 54] Last year in April. The newspaper The Independent published an article. That explained that in primary schools across the UK. Children as young as four years old.

Four years old. Are suffering from anxiety. Eating disorders. All because they're worried about school. They're worried about bullying.

They're worried about family life. And all manner of things. At four years old. We live in an anxious world. And a lot of it revolves around material things.

Our world is worried about life. And what that means. And what that looks like. Our young people are gripped by this fear of missing out. We worry about the future.

We worry about what we'll eat. What we'll drink. What we wear. And all of that is boosted by the media. Which popularizes this unattainable idea of perfection and bliss.

[21 : 52] And so do you see how Jesus' words at the end of verse 25 are so freeing? Is not life more than food? And the body more than clothes?

Jesus is saying that your life is not just a meaningless, pointless thing. That the world will tell you it is. There is so much more to life than we're born. We eat.

We live. We die. The truth is that you were created for eternity. And if you live for eternity. Then you know that God is alive and that he is real.

And what does Jesus say? Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or store up away in barns. And yet your heavenly father feeds them.

Are you not much more valuable than they? So why should we focus on the eternal and not the temporary? Well because God is our heavenly father.

[22 : 50] And he cares for his children. He is the one who feeds the animals of the world. And he is the one who adorns the flowers that we love to look at. God is the one who created this whole world.

He is the one who spoke the world into being. He is the one who sees and knows what is happening. And he is the one who gives good gifts to his people and to the wider world.

So if this is the God that we stand before. Then surely it makes no sense for us to worry about things. Why? Because of who we are in God's sight.

See God doesn't look on us this evening and see a bunch of cells thrown together to make a person. God doesn't look on us and see an insignificant being. But God looks at you this evening and sees you as someone who is bearing his image.

And if you are a Christian here this evening God looks at you and he sees his child. Someone who has been called to be different by God and for God.

[23 : 56] God sees you and calls you to live the way he knows is best for you. Now if Jesus just stood there and said don't worry about anything. Then it wouldn't really make much sense.

It would be like putting a children's dinosaur plaster on a severe cut. Simply worry not worrying about things is not the answer. But Jesus continues and he says do not worry.

Because of who God says you are. And because of who God is. And because God knows what you need in life. Jesus is saying to his followers.

Don't worry about the temporary. Like the rest of the world. And do not run after these things. But instead keep your focus on Jesus. The temporary is fleeting.

But the God that we serve is faithful. So Jesus says rather than pursuing the material things that will ultimately be destroyed. Instead they should be pursuing something of far greater significance.

[24 : 58] The kingdom of God. And so our worries. Our anxieties. Of the temporary things of this world. Can only be cured by the assurance.

Of us living for our king. Therefore we live for his kingdom and righteousness. Which means that our chief drive. Should be to live under the authority of our king.

And to see his kingdom extended. Our chief aim should be to see God honoured. To see his reign as king extended. And for his will to be done on this earth.

This is what it means to keep our focus on eternity. And seeking God's kingdom means pursuing him in life. In absolute submission to his will.

Because he knows what's best for us. And he provides what we need. What are you living for? Living this way doesn't mean we'll always have happy lives.

[26 : 04] Without a care in the world. That isn't true. But it does mean that our focus and our perspective will be different. Christians are called to suffer.

There is a cost to being a Christian. And it is big. But the glory far outweighs the cost. As Christians we're called to live distinct lives.

And we will suffer because of that. But the price of escaping that suffering. Is far too high to pay. Because it would mean abandoning Jesus. So not worrying about the temporary means not focusing.

And putting such a huge emphasis on having that bigger house. Or that second home. Not worrying about whether you'll get that promotion at work or not.

Not worrying about the temporary things means the day to day things of life. But it also means as we face sickness and death.

[27 : 08] We have hope. Because our final place of rest is not the grave. But it is the presence of God. Everything that we see in this world.

Including our own lives. Are temporary. There was a missionary family who lived in the province of Assam in India. And they labored for years and years.

And one day they saw some fruit. And a family became Christians. And they were baptized. And then they left. And once they'd left. The chief of that village decided to make an example of these Christians.

And so he dragged the whole family into the village square. And he looked at the father and said. Renounce Jesus Christ right now. Or your whole family will be executed. And the story was later told to the missionaries.

And they said what this man said. He responded with. I have decided to follow Jesus. There is no turning back. And with those words his children were killed.

[28 : 14] And he wept. And yet in his pain he said. The world behind me. The cross before me. And then his wife was killed.

And the chief said. You've got one more chance to renounce Jesus. And he said. Though none is here to go with me. Still I will follow. And with that the man was killed.

And the missionaries went back. And what they found. Was unbelievable. Because the people who murdered this family. And the whole town had become Christians.

Why? Well because. This man's focus was not on the momentary things. It was on eternity. And his witness changed their hearts. His gaze was fixed on the kingdom of God.

This family's testimony spread. And was the beginnings of the song that we sing today. I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back. No turning back. This is the life that I want to live.

[29 : 28] This is the life that I want all of you to live. And this is the life that God wants us all to live. Friends if we base our identity on the things of this earth.

Then we are on a path that is not leading to life. But we are on a path that is leading to a selfish existence. That will end in God's judgment. Jesus calls us to a far greater life.

And we have the privilege to surrender our everything to God. The one who created us. The one who knows us. The one who loves us. And the one who has already given up so much for us.

By dying on the cross. The world is gripped by a fear of missing out. Our world lives for the moment. But we are called to a greater purpose. And a greater person. Jesus Christ. God in the flesh. Who died on the cross. And rose again. And calls us to be distinct disciples.

[30 : 30] For our own fame. No. For his fame. And for his glory. And my fear is. That there are millions of people in this world. Who are missing out.

Not on life. But on the good news of Jesus Christ. And the true life that they were created to live. Because they don't believe it. And as Romans 10 says.

How will they believe if they do not know. And how will they know. If nobody tells them. What are you living for? Let's pray together.

I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back.

No turning back. Lord. As we live in a world. That hates you. We ask for that strength. And for that endurance.

[31 : 26] To live distinct lives. That point to your glory. And your fame. We ask for your strength. And your help. To live lives. Of light.

And not darkness. Because that life. And that light. That was given to us. Was so costly. And we thank you Jesus. That you were willing to pay that price.

For undeserving. Sinful. Broken human beings. Like us. Lord we ask that our lives. Will be marked by obedience. By submission to you.

And by an out. All out surrender. To your will. For your fame. And for your glory. We ask this in your son's. Holy and precious name.
Amen.