

Not Silos, But Wheels

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Epiphany / Discipleship; Family; Prefer / Jonah 3:1–5; Jonah 3:10; Psalm 62; 1 Corinthians 7:29–31; 1 Corinthians 7:32–35; Mark 1:14–20

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Besides my time in school and living in the big city I have always lived in places when I would drive around (or ride) in the countryside, I would see farms. On the farm, there would be a silo next to the barn. I have learned from talking to farmers that each silo holds one thing. I learned from one that they would chop the corn that they'd grown, stalks and all, into small pieces and put it in the silo. It's called silage. During the winter, that's what they fed cows with, along with the hay and the grain.

This one farmer had the chopped-up corn in the silo, hay in the hayloft, straw in a different part of the barn, and the grain in a different building altogether. Each crop was kept separate from the others. Each silo holds its own thing.

In a way, we now live our lives that look like silos. I'll show you what I mean. I have cans and on top of each of them I've attached a word or picture to represent different areas of life. They'll each be a silo. Here's one for family life. Here's another one for work. Here's one for the church. Here's one for the stuff we have. This one is for the role that we have as citizens. Here's another one for sports and the last one I've labeled fun for the rest and recreation times in life.

Notice how I have them all lined up separate from one another. The people at work may not be the people we meet at church. What we do at home is different from when we are at school or out in the community. How we use our money when out shopping is different from when we drop in offerings to the collection plate. What we consider fun may not line up with how we feel about work. Do you see how this works? We live in silos. We keep each of these areas separate from one another.

The problem with silo living is that it too often leaves Jesus out of so many areas of our lives. We can go to work and Jesus recedes into the background. We pull out our credit card at the store and forget about how Jesus wants us to save or be generous for those in need. We can get so caught up in our fun activities that worshipping Jesus is left at home while we are on vacation or how we act at a ballgame. Family time or when we are at home becomes so filled with errands, cleaning, television and "me time" that time for devotions gets squeezed out.

Oh, and not to mention our political thought. Politics in general, right or left, don't reflect the Christian faith right now, not from what I read on social media or see on the news. Jesus is relegated to the church silo and that means he's not guiding the other areas of our life. That's not good. It's never good to leave Jesus out of family, work, finances, the voting booth/politics, sports, and recreation. He needs to be involved in all aspects of our lives.

The Apostle Paul knew that:

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the appointed time has grown very short

he says.

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From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, 30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, 31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

In this short passage from 1 Corinthians, Paul is calling us to live every day with Jesus and for him, no matter what part of life that might be. Why? Because the time we have left is "Short."

Now, Paul isn't so much trying to predict when Jesus will come back on Judgment Day here. He may have believed that Jesus' return to bring an end to this world would come back soon, but he's not focusing on when that will happen. Rather, he's emphasizing that the time we have left before Jesus ends time as we know it is a critical time. It's an opportune time. It's a time to live a certain way. He's calling for an urgency to live for Jesus in the days that are left for this world or in the time we have left in our personal lives.

Oh, one day Jesus will return. What a glorious day that will be! Tears will evaporate because sickness and death will be gone. No more Covid or Cancers or Heart attacks. Evil will be consigned to hell forever. No more shootings. No more bombings. No more injustice. No more violence. No more war. NO more political divisiveness. No more bullying. Instead, the dead in Jesus will rise from the grave. A new creation will arise out of the ashes of this world. Our bodies will be whole and healthy. We'll fill our lungs with the cleanest of air to sing praises that lift our hearts to new heights. Our eyes will clearly see the beauty of God's creation in the rainbow of colors. A joy wells up inside us as we're reunited with those we lost to death and hugs abound once again. And all creation will live in harmony as even the lamb will lie down with the lion in perfect peace and safety. We're looking forward to that day. Come Lord. Jesus.

And we live in that hope, that anticipation, because Jesus has already risen from the dead. On the cross, he took upon himself our sins and diseases, our tears and violence, our death and hell. He gives us a glimpse of what's to come with his body whole and glorified. He has paved the way for our eternity, and in his victory this world will one day pass away. A new creation awaits us. Our Lord and Savior will welcome us to his home forever. He brings joy to us and all his followers.

But we don't know when that will be any more than Paul did. So we wait, and as we wait, we live in an opportune time. The days we have couldn't be more critical for living with Jesus and for Jesus in every area of our lives. How do we live that way?

Listen to St. Paul: Live as though you were not married? What?! No, Paul is not calling for us to disband our families. Later on in this chapter, he says we don't sin if we do get married or if we do not. But we're not to live as if our family is the most important. There is more than family. Our earthly families will be torn apart by death. Those of you that have lost a parent, a child, a spouse know that all too well. Our life with Christ endures forever and calls for living for him now. We simply cannot leave Jesus out of homes. I typically will tell people going through pre-marriage counseling that Jesus needs to be a part of their marriages and families.

Listen to St. Paul: Live as though you are not rejoicing or mourning. What?! No, Paul is not calling for us to live emotionally detached from life like robots. Yes, we will rejoice at a birthday party, at a birth of a child, at a Christmas or Easter celebration, on vacation swimming in the ocean or at least sitting on the sand soaking up the rays, or even now at some point just sitting in a restaurant, enjoying a meal. And yes we will mourn. Tears will stream down your cheeks when you stand before the casket to say good-bye to someone that is dear to you. But our emotions will change or fade as time passes. We don't just live for the joy in life nor are we destroyed by the sadness. NO, there's more than those time. Our life with Christ endures forever and calls for living for him now. We give our emotions to him in every circumstance of life.

Paul says to buy as though we had nothing. What?! No, Paul is not calling for us to give everything away. We will go to the grocery store and buy food for the week. We will pay taxes and our bills. We will purchase our clothing when we need it. But all this stuff will one day be gone. We brought nothing into this world and will take nothing out of it. Paul is saying that there's much more to life than what we can buy and call our own. Our life with Christ endures forever and calls for living for him now. We simply cannot leave Jesus out of what we buy, keep, and give away.

Yes, Paul says this world will pass away. But before that happens, he calls for us to live in this opportune time, this critical time, with Jesus in every area of our lives. We are called to to live with Jesus and for Jesus at every junction at every moment of our lives.

So instead of living in silos, we are to live as if life were a wheel. Let me show you what I mean. At the hub of the wheel is Jesus. The cross is empty. Our resurrected Lord is present here and now in our lives. He has guaranteed the life to come. Everything revolves around Jesus, whether it be work, sports, possessions, family and home, church, recreation or your vocation as citizens of the United States. He is the center of your life.

Now look beyond the wheel itself. The words are “Our resurrection,” “New Creation,” “Jesus Returns,” and “Glorious Final Day.” Our hope, our future, is there, waiting for us. And it’s glorious.

The spokes are the various areas of life we live each day. Work is connected to Jesus and looks forward to his return. In the meantime, we work with Jesus right next to us. Honesty, integrity, and effort go into what we’re doing and not just for a paycheck. Our work is a way for us to live for Jesus.

Our money and stuff are not our own, just like our bodies are not our own. It’s all a gift from Jesus. What’s in this wallet is not mine to do with it however I please. NO, my decisions come from my relationship with Jesus too. Some will go for bills, getting delivery from Dominoes or picking up pizza at Caddy Shack or stopping by the Blueberry Line for a cinnamon roll and cup of coffee, and our next vacation. But those envelopes from Salem Lutheran Church are faithfully filled as well. SO also are donation for those in need. One of the most important lines on your tax return is not how much you made or your refund or what you owe. It’s the amount of charitable contributions you’ve given away because Jesus is at the center of your money life too.

The Bible tells us to respect our governing authorities. The Bible does not specify that you only respect your Republican authorities or the Democrat authorities. The Bible does not specify you only respect the authorities that have no party designations. Remember that Paul when he wrote to the Romans, the Roman empire was under the control of Emperor Nero who murdered Christians. So yes, today, we respect our governing authorities, those that God has placed into leadership.

We are to rest and relax in life. A day off is good work. A vacation can recharge the batteries. Yet the decisions we make to enjoy ourselves still involve Jesus? Where will we go? How will I act? How much will I spend? What role will alcohol play? Where will we worship? Do you see how it works?

Live life as a wheel, with Jesus as the hub, eternity as your hope, and every spoke lived with Jesus and for Him.

There are always moments in life that teach you how critical and opportune time is we have to live with Jesus in every area of life. I remember one day when I was driving to the Seminary it was icy, and my car started to slide and I thought I was going to go off the ramp and down

an embankment, but I never did. This was a frighten moment! My time could have been over in an instant. You all have your own moments in life where you think...wow...that sure came close.

Jesus could come back today, tomorrow or a hundred years from now. I could live 60 more year or life could be over in a moment. But the amount of time left is not the key question. The question is how. How do we live when life is short? Not as silos but as a wheel. The hub is Jesus risen from the dead and the end is glorious. And the time now is critical, opportune for living with Jesus and for him. Not silos but a wheel.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.