Yesterday, Today, & Tomorrow

Hebrews 13:8

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

• I want to preach to you, a few moments this morning,
  o as we are caught in this moment in time
    ■ where it seems like, for the last three years,
    ■ it has been difficult to get
      o any forward momentum going.
  • Covid has produced a series of starts and stops,
    o it has been up and down,
      ■ and every time it feels like
        ■ we are starting to move forward
          o in a positive direction,
        ■ here comes another wave of this business
    • and we find ourselves online again,
      o trying to be the church
        ■ in isolation from one another.

• Let me say this first,
  o That we were never meant
    ■ to live out our faith in isolation.
• Church is a community,
  o the body of Christ is a communal thing,
    ■ it is a familial thing,
  o and none of us was ever intended
    ■ to walk this road of life alone.
  o The old song, you’re my brother and you’re my sister,
    ■ has always embodied the spirit
      • of what it truly means to be the church.
        o We are in this thing together.
        o We fight our battles together.
        o We overcome together
          ■ and we celebrate our victories together.
  o The devil knows that if he can isolate you,
    ■ he’s already won half the battle against you.
  o IF he can keep you from becoming a part
    • of the community of the church,
      • then he has stripped away from you
        o the support structure that is intended
          ■ to help you make it through
            • the difficult seasons of your life.
• Already, our culture works against that.
  o If the digital age has accomplished anything,
    ▪ it has further isolated us.
• I realize, as a communication professor,
  o that the various tools that we have at our disposal
    ▪ have the capacity to bring us together
      • like never before.
  o I realize that the whole world is connected
    ▪ in ways that it has never been connected before.
• We can literally, reach out and touch the world
  o from virtually anywhere,
    ▪ and interact with one another,
      • as we are doing right here,
        ▪ even though we are divided
          ▪ by many miles that stand between us.
• But, the truth that every communication researcher knows
  o is that, while we are more connected than ever before,
    ▪ we are also more isolated than ever before.

• Virtual connectivity is a wonderful thing,
  o but we tend to engage it from a standpoint of isolation.
    ▪ Just take a look, sometime,
      • around a room crowded with people
        ▪ and notice how many of them are on their phones.
• We have created an environment
  o where we can be isolated
    ▪ even when we are together.
  o And, make no mistake about it,
    ▪ this is an environment where your enemy thrives.

• Paul likened the enemy of your soul to a roaring lion.
  o It’s a good analogy, because, though lions hunt in packs,
    ▪ they seek out prey that is isolated.
  o Their focus is on the stragglers,
    ▪ the sick and weak,
      • those who have been separated
        ▪ from the safety of their community.
• So, this morning, as we meet online,
  o for the third, and hopefully the last,
    ▪ Sunday in a row,
  o I want to remind you just how important it really is
    ▪ that your connection to the body of Christ
• consists of more than just a virtual attendance
  o to the house of God.

  o You need the church
    ▪ and the church needs you.

  o You need the connection and the support
    ▪ of brothers and sisters
      • who are fighting the same battles,
        o dealing with the same struggles
          ▪ and experiencing the same weariness
            • that you are.

  o You need to be able to draw strength
    ▪ from those who are strong
      • and draw encouragement
        o from those who have overcome
          ▪ and to be able to share your burdens
            • with others of like precious faith.

  o We need each other.
    ▪ And, collectively, we need the church.

• That’s why this situation, meeting online,
  o while it has been necessary at times,
    ▪ is not the ideal situation for the church.

• There is something dynamic that happens
  o when we come together
    ▪ and begin to worship him together,
      • that just doesn’t happen
        o in places of isolation and separation.

• So let me encourage you,
  o we will be back in church Wednesday...
    ▪ Be there.

  o Barring some natural disaster,
    ▪ we will be back in our building next Sunday...
      • Be there.

  o You need the church and the church needs you.

• We’ve started a new year,
  o and there’s something about a new year
    ▪ that always puts me in a reflective mood.

• Perhaps it is the knowledge
  o that a season of life is passing away
    ▪ and that a new season of life
      • is an open book before me.

• But I tend to begin to think about
Yesterday Today And Tomorrow

• the things I want to improve
  ▪ from the past year.
• I look at where we are as a church
  ▪ and I ask myself,
    • how can we get better?
• That means I have to come to grips
  o with what I perceive as shortcomings in the past year.
• For me, it is usually a critical review.
  o The transition between years
    ▪ is usually a moment where I try
      • to really think critically
        o about where we have been
      • and try to think hopefully
        o about where can go from here.
  o My focus, during this time of transition,
    ▪ seems to be on yesterday
      • and tomorrow.

• That’s the way it is at pivotal moments of life.
  o When something life-changing happens,
    ▪ we tend to starkly divide
      • our yesterdays from all of our tomorrows
        o at that point in time.
  o When we lose a loved one,
    ▪ we are faced with the fact
      • that nothing will ever be the same.
  o Our past with them is settled.
    ▪ Our yesterdays are only memories.
      • And our tomorrows are forever altered.
  o Never again will that individual be a part of our lives.
    ▪ There is that moment of stark division
      • that accompanies pivotal moments, like death.

• That’s where Mary and Martha were in John 11.
  o Their brother Lazarus had fallen ill and died.
    ▪ They sent word to Jesus,
      • as soon as they knew he was sick.
    ▪ But Jesus was rather slow in coming.
      • And when he arrived, it was too late.
        o Death had already occurred.
  o Life had forever been altered.
    ▪ Nothing remained but the memories of yesterday
      • and the dismal prospect
Yesterday Today And Tomorrow

Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

The Pentecostals of Lake City

- of a future without their brother in it.

- When Martha sees Jesus coming,
  - she goes out to meet him.

John 11:21

21 Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”

- Martha’s mind is captivated by yesterday.
  - Lord, if only you had been here.
    - My brother would not have died.

- That’s the way it is with yesterday.
  - Yesterday is forever settled.
    - It cannot be changed.
      - What has happened has happened.
        - And nothing we do will ever undo it.

- And the power of yesterday
  - is that it dictates the terms of our tomorrows.
    - To Martha, it didn’t matter that Jesus had come,
      - because yesterday had already happened.

- I want to preach to someone for just a moment
  - about your yesterdays.

- Listen, it is true that you can’t go back
  - and change yesterday.
    - What is done is done.
      - What has happened has happened.

- Mary is living with this sense of finality about yesterday.
  - Lord, if you had been here,
    - things would be different...
      - but you weren’t here.

- Some of you are living in that same place.
  - Lord, if only I wouldn’t have done
    - the things I did yesterday,
      - my life would be so much different today.
        - If I didn’t give in to that temptation...
        - If I didn’t make that poor decision...
        - If I didn’t give in to the peer pressure...
      - Things would be so much different in my life.

- Let me tell you something about yesterday...
  - it is finished.
  - It is done.
• Nothing you can do will ever change it.
  • But what happened to you yesterday
  • doesn’t have to determine your future.

• That’s the thing about yesterday,
  • it sets us on a trajectory into our tomorrows.
    • It determines a course for our lives.
  • But, I need to tell someone this morning,
    • that even though you cannot change your yesterdays,
      • they don’t have to determine your tomorrows.

• That’s what Martha failed to realize...
  • She’s so fixated on the fact
    • that Jesus wasn’t here yesterday,
      • that she has ignored the fact
        • that he is here today!

• Listen... I recognize that yesterday
  • will always have some impact on tomorrow.
    • I understand the law of sowing and reaping.
      • I recognize that the seeds of yesterday
        • will always produce fruit in our tomorrows.
          • That is simply the way it is
            • and the way it has always been.

• However, what I’m here to tell you, this morning,
  • is that there is something about
    • the power of Jesus in your life TODAY,
      • that has a way of overshadowing
        • all of your yesterdays!

• But Marth is so caught up in her sorrow
  • that she can’t see that.
    • So Jesus tries to tell her:

John 11:23-24

23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”
24 Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

• When Jesus confronts Martha
  • with the promise of his presence,
    • she immediately jumps to the future...
  • I know, dear Lord, that you will have the power
    • to raise him from the dead
      • on that great resurrection day.
  • I understand, Lord, that you have the ability
• to change my life at some point in the future.
  • But that doesn’t change where I am right now.

• Listen, because I need to talk to someone
  o who is caught in a trap of Hell.
• The enemy of your soul has convinced you
  o that if you had made the right choices in your past,
    • God would have been able to use you.
  o That if you had not stumbled and fallen in your past,
    • that God would have been able to deliver you,
      • that you would have been able to live for him.
  o And you’ve allowed your past to dictate your future.
• However, in the same breath,
  o the enemy has convinced you
    • that, even though you know
      • that God can save you,
        o and that God can deliver you,
    • that the salvation of the Lord
      • or deliverance of the Lord
        • is perpetually a future tense thing
        • in your life.
  o He can save you... tomorrow.
    • He can deliver you...
      • if you get something right in your life tomorrow.
    • He can bring you out,
      • if only you measure up to his mercy
        • at some point in your future.
  o Your enemy wants to keep your deliverance,
    • your victory over the bondage of sin
      • and the guilt and shame of your past
        • as some kind of perpetual future tense reality.
  o If only you could get faithful in your prayer life,
    • he would deliver you then.
      • If only you would read your Bible more,
        • then he would empower you.
      • If only you can somehow measure up in your future,
        • then the grace of God would be loosed in your life.

• But listen to me this morning,
  o because I have a message of mercy
    • from the throne of God.
• Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever!
  o The same God who could have delivered you yesterday,
• has the power to bring you out today.
  o The same God who could have preserved you yesterday,
    • has the power to redeem you today.
  o The same God that could have kept you from your failure,
    • has the power, **RIGHT NOW,**
      • to do a work of restoration in your life!
  o He’s not just the God of yesterday...
    • He is the God of today!

• Furthermore, the same God
  o who can establish your tomorrows,
    • can establish you today.
• Come on, somebody...
  o the enemy doesn’t mind
    • that you believe that he **CAN** deliver you
      • as long as you never come to the place
        o that you believe that He **WILL** deliver you.
  o The enemy doesn’t mind that you believe
    • that salvation and restoration
      • can come into your life
        o at some point in the future,
  o as long as that time never really arrives in your life.
    • The enemy of your soul is quite comfortable
      • with God being God in your yesterdays,
        o and all of your tomorrows
          • as long as he is never God in your today!
• But I’m here, this morning,
  o to declare to someone a right now God!
    • Listen to what Jesus told Martha:

**John 11:25**

25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

• I AM the resurrection and the life.
  o I Am is the covenant name of God.
    • When Jesus said “I AM...”
      • he was doing more than just stating
        o a present tense reality,
    • he was declaring
      • that he is perpetually
        o the God of right now.
• Listen... His name is not I WAS.
  ▪ His name is not I WILL BE.
  ▪  His name is I AM.
• That is a present tense declaration
  ▪ of the sovereignty of God.
  ▪ Right now...
    ▪ He is a deliverer.
  ▪ Right now...
    ▪ He is a healer!
  ▪ Right now...
    ▪ he stand poised to do a work
      ▪ of restoration in your life.
      ▪  Right now!

• I want to join my voice this morning with the Apostle Paul,
  o who pleaded with the church at Corinth
    ▪ not to receive the grace of God in vain.
    ▪ He declared, for all who would hear...

  2 Corinthians 6:2
  \[2 \text{ ... Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.}\]

• I want to tell someone, this morning,
  o that he is a right now God!
    ▪ God wants to deliver you today.
    ▪ God wants to heal you today.
    ▪ God wants to restore you today!
• He’s not waiting for next Sunday.
  o HE’s not waiting for another opportunity
    ▪ for us to come together.
    ▪ He is ready, right now,
      ▪ to do what only he can do.

  ▪ I understand that the circumstances are not ideal.
    o I understand that we are in a virtual environment.
  ▪ I understand that you are watching this
    o but are not present where I am right now.
  ▪ But I am compelled of the Holy Ghost to tell you
    o that He is not far from you.
      ▪ That right now,
        ▪ if you will call on him,
          ▪ there is deliverance in his name.
      ▪ That right now,
• if you will surrender to him,
  o you don’t have to wait
    • until you get everything worked out.
  o You don’t have to wait
    • until you get your life on track.

  ▪ Right now,
    • he will forgive you,
  ▪ right now,
    • he will restore you,
  ▪ right now
    • he will redeem you.

  ▪ He is a right now God.
    o Listen as he speaks into your life this morning...
      ▪ I AM the healer.
      ▪ I AM the deliverer.
      ▪ I AM the way maker.

  ▪ I want to encourage you today,
    o to let God do a work in your life,
      ▪ right now!