

Sermon - January 21, 2018 - Epiphany 3,

Living Life like a Wheel

1 Corinthians 7:29–35



Dear Friends in Christ

Our text of meditation this morning is based on the epistle reading from 1 Corinthians 7. And as I was exploring these verses, I was reminded of a life experience from the past from when I was a boy. I grew up in farming community, back then families grew lots of corn, lots of beans and peas, and some wheat too. And in harvest season, after the corn was brought in, we would put the corn ears in the sun to dry then we would store the corn in wooden silos, sometimes located outside on their own, or on boxes connected to barns or even rooms

ceilings. And as we used the corn we would bring a few corn ears and kernel them for our tortillas, or those who had enough to bring the corn to the market. The corn stock is used for livestock food, or sometimes for firewood, or even for fences too, but they are store outside, some people will store in burns, but mostly just in the field. While the corn and peas will be stored either in sacks or in bushels stacked somewhere in the house. A little different in up here in this area, where we see lots of silos on the farms around, regardless we know that each silo will house only one kind of grain. Be it corn, wheat, peas, or canola, depending what farmers are growing.

So, as such, farmers separate their crops according to their kind; it's a no brainer, right?!

I. We live as silos, leaving Jesus out of many areas of life.

Now, what does it have to do with us Christians? Well, in a way, we seem to live lives that look like silos. I mean, we compartmentalize sections of our lives. Now, imagine a bunch of silos, and each is a section of your life. One silo is for our family life. Another one is work. I've labeled this one "Fun" for the rest and recreation times in life. Another one for shopping and the stuff we have in life. Another one is our role as citizens as we live in this country. And lastly, this one is for church.

Notice how they're all lined up but 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're at school or out in the community. How we use our money when out shopping could be different from when the collection plate goes by. What we consider fun may not line up with how we feel about work. Do you see how this works? We live our lives like grains in silos, separated from the rest of crops.

The problem with silo living is that it too often leaves Jesus out of so many areas of life. We can go to work and Jesus stays in another silo. We pull out our credit card at a 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 worshiping Jesus is left at home while on vacation or how we're acting at a ballgame. Family time or when we're at home becomes so filled with errands, cleaning, television, and "me time" that time for devotions gets squeezed out. Politics certainly don't reflect the Christian faith right now, not from

what I sometimes read on social media. Jesus is relegated to the church silo, and that means he's not guiding the other areas of life. That's not good. It's never good to leave Jesus out of any area of our lives.

II. Paul calls for us to live in this opportune time with eyes on the final-day resurrection because of Christ's resurrection.

The apostle Paul knew that: "The appointed time has grown very short," he says. "From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, 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, 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" (vv 29–31). 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 again. He may have believed that Jesus' return to bring an end to this world would come soon, but he's not focusing on when that will happen. Rather, he's emphasizing that the time we have left before Jesus return whatever long is left, 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 what should be more concerning, whatever 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 will be gone. No more cancers or heart attacks. Evil will be consigned to hell forever. No more shootings. No more injustice. No more violence. No more war. 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 see clearly the beauty of God's creation in all the rainbow of colors. Exceeding joy will well up inside us as we will be reunited with those we lost to death then hugs will abound once again or will be in place if we didn't have that many hugs while on this earth. 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. So we say 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 sin and diseases, our tears and violence, our death and hell. He took all the evil and buried it in a tomb. Then on Easter morning, he burst forth in glory and life. 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.

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 are critical for living with Jesus and for Jesus in every area of our lives. How do we live that way?

Listen to Paul: Live as though you were not married. What?! No, Paul is not calling for us to disband our families. Later 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 all or the only important thing. Some of you have lost your spouse to death already, but your children and grandchildren continue to grow, your days continue. Yes memories still continue to be

celebrated and treasured. Why? Because marriage and family is very important! Don't be mistaken, what Paul is saying is that there's more than family that our life with Christ endures forever and calls for living for him now. We simply cannot leave Jesus out of our homes.

Live as if you are not rejoicing or mourning, Paul says. What?! No, Paul is not calling for us to live emotionally detached from others, and be like robots. Yes, we will rejoice at a birthday party, at a Christmas Eve dinner, on vacation swimming in the lake or the ocean, or just enjoying a meal at a restaurant. And we will mourn. Tears will stream down your cheeks when you stand before the casket to say good-bye to someone. But our emotions will change or fade as time passes. We don't live just for the joys in life nor are we destroyed by the sadness. No, there's more than those times. 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 bills. We will go shopping for clothes. 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 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.

III. We live as wheels with Jesus as the hub and the many areas of life devoted to him.

So instead of living in silos, we are to live as if life were a wheel. What? What is that mean? Well if you look closely life can be seen as a wheel, with Jesus as the hub, eternity as your hope, and every spoke is lived with Jesus and for Him.

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. He is the center of 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 and in Jesus.

Our money and stuff are not our own. It's all a gift from Jesus. What's in this wallet is not mine to do with however I please. No, my decisions here come from my relationship with Jesus too. Some will go for bills, food and holidays. And even primarily your offerings. So also are donations 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. No, 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. We are to rest and relax in life. A day off is good. A holiday 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? Is going to a bar on Friday or Saturday night acceptable to me as Christian? Where will we worship if we are on holidays?

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.

This is true, dear Friends life moves on and the number of days we have left grows shorter. And also know that life is fragile. Health can turn to pain in a day's time, and then the day will come when medicines and doctors won't be able to make things better. Our life can be recalled in a blink of an eye. And Jesus might come back soon too. We don't know. We could live longer too, or Jesus might come back in a hundred years. 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.

Amen.