

Sermon: *Don't Waste Your Life*
Text: *Ephesians 5:15 – 17*
Date: *October 5, 2008 AM*
Place: *Jesup First UMC*

Mr. Mills, my 11th grade shop teacher, called me into his office one day and said: “*Tucker, you don't belong in a shop class; you belong in FBLA or something. And you're wasting my time and yours. So, next quarter, I don't want to see you in my class. Understand?*”

I saw a bumper sticker that said: “*Life is too precious to waste.*” And I got to wondering: how does a person waste their life? And if you can waste it, isn't there a way that you can keep from wasting it?

Well, Paul said: “*Be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do.*” Paul said: be careful how you live. You see, life is so precious and it needs to be lived carefully and we do that by knowing and understanding why we're here. What on earth are we here for? That's what we're going to talk about for the next few weeks as we enter into *40 Days of Purpose*.

But today is a day of preparation. So, we're going to prepare our hearts and minds for this 40 Day spiritual journey by answering three basic questions.

1. WHAT DOES GOD WANT FROM MY LIFE?

Romans 6 says: “*Give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God.*” What does God want? He wants my whole life, everything I am and everything I have!

The Bible never says you can be a Christian and continue to live any old way you want. God wants it all – not 50%, not 75%, not even 99%; God wants it all. C.S. Lewis said: “*The only thing Christianity cannot be is moderately important.*” If the Bible is true, then God deserves everything I am and everything I have. And if it’s not true, then we’re just wasting our time.

Now, some folks try to ride the fence and pretend they don’t know what God wants. But the Bible says, “*This is what the Lord your God wants you to do: respect the Lord and do what He has told you to do. Love Him. Serve the Lord your God with your whole being.*” We can’t serve God sometimes; we must serve God at all times, with everything that is in us.

And you can’t serve God and something else either. Jesus said: “*No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*” So, we all have a choice to make; serve God or serve something else. You can’t serve God and your wallet; you can’t serve God and your job; you can’t serve God and your leisure; God wants it all!

Who are you serving? What is first in your life? Is it your family ... your job ... your retirement? These are all good things, but they can’t be first! One day, Jesus told a man: “*Follow me.*” And he said: “*Okay, but let me take care of a few things first.*” And ultimately, the man went away, because you can’t follow Jesus and put yourself first. Some people say: “*God, I’ll serve you, but let me graduate from college first.*” Or

“God, I’ll serve you, but let me get married first.” Or “God, I’ll serve you, but let me retire first.” And God says, “If I ain’t first, nothing else is going to be right in your life. You will have no other gods before me.”

In Luke 14, we read the parable of a great king who planned a banquet and invited people to come, but *“They all began making excuses. And the first said, ‘I just bought a field and I must go and see it.’ Another said: ‘I just bought five yoke of oxen and I’m on the way to try them out.’ And another said: ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’”* These folks were invited to the King’s banquet, but they turned Him down. The first man’s excuse was wealth; the second’s was work; and the third’s was his wife.

What’s your excuse? Why aren’t you putting God first? Listen, here’s a secret: if you’ll put God first, He will take care of everything else. Proverbs 3:6 says: *“In everything you do, put God first, and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success.”*

So, the first question we need to come to grips with is: What does God want from me? Everything!

2. WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

What does it take to give God everything, to be totally sold out for Jesus Christ? *Well, it takes discipline.* Proverbs 10 says: *“Whoever practices discipline is on the way to life.”* It takes discipline to be a disciple. Paul told Timothy: *“Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”*

Now, *discipline is simply delayed gratification.* It means doing something difficult today so you can

enjoy the benefits tomorrow. Some of us are incredibly disciplined. We're disciplined at work; our day is planned and we're on time! Some are disciplined physically; we exercise every day! Some never miss their favorite TV show. And I never miss a meal; I'm disciplined! But if I'm going to be all I can be for God, I must be spiritually disciplined.

I Timothy 4 says: "*Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit.*" And if I'm going to be spiritually fit, then I've got to develop a few godly habits. So over the next 40 Days, we need to work on a few spiritual exercises that will help keep us in spiritually fit or spiritually disciplined.

First, we need to learn to let go! There are some things we need to let go of so we can be more faithful in other things. Hebrews 12:1 says: "*Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress.*" Two things hold us back: sin and weight. And God says: "*Let 'em go!*"

Now, we know what sin is, but what is weight? Well, weight is something that's not necessarily wrong; they're just not necessary at all. It could be anything from golfing to goofing, but God says, "*Look, if you want to grow, let em go.*" You can't say yes to everything. You've got to say "*no*" to some things in order to say "*yes*" to God."

Now, most of us are way too busy already and over the next 40 Days, we're asking you to add a 15 minute devotional, a weekly bible study, and a weekly scripture memorization. So, before we add something

else to an already busy schedule, we have to let go of something.

So, here's a second discipline: put first things first! In Luke 10, Jesus went to the home of Mary and Martha and Luke says, "Martha was distracted by many tasks." And she demanded that Jesus intervene, but Jesus said: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, but there is a need for only one thing and Mary has made the better choice." Jesus says, "If it comes down to spending time with me or cooking supper, spend time with me."

Do you ever feel like Martha? What's on your to-do list? Are you too busy for God, too busy to spend 40 Days focusing on spiritual things? The average person lives 25,550 days; can't we spend just 40 of them focusing on Jesus?

Proverbs 39:6 says: "All our busy rushing ends in nothing." And Proverbs 10:27 says: "Reverence for the Lord adds hours to each day." If we put God first, God brings everything else into focus. Now, some of you are probably thinking, "Yea, I know. I'm not very disciplined." Listen, a lot of us aren't! But we don't have to do it by ourselves; God will help us. Philippians 2:13 says: "God is always at work in you to make you willing and able to obey His own purpose."

So here's what I'm asking you to do: 1) put God first for the next 40 Days and 2) let go of the distractions.

It takes discipline to fully live our lives for Christ!

3. WHY SHOULD I DO IT?

Why should I make an effort to grow spiritually? Well, we could spend the rest of our day talking about the benefits, but even if there were no benefits, I can tell you the reason you ought to do this – the cross. Because of the cross! Jesus gave His life completely for us and He asks us to give our lives in return.

Today, we're going to prepare our hearts for our ***40 Days of Purpose*** by celebrating Holy Communion. II Corinthians 5:15 says: **"He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again."** He died for us so that we could live for Him. So Paul told the church at Rome: **"Brothers and sisters, I encourage you, in view of all that God has done for you in Christ, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, dedicated to God and pleasing to Him."**

Will you think about this as we prepare for Holy Communion?