

**“HOW LONG”**

**PASTOR MIKE CORWIN**

**ALL SAINTS SUNDAY**

**TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-20**

**GOD’S WORD: ROMANS 16:1-16**

**I – WE REMEMBER:**

Today is All Saint’s Sunday and we started our service this morning by reading a list of members who have died in the last year. We recognize them as saints who have passed from this life to the next. We lit candles in remembrance for them.

My question for you today though is this, “What do you remember about these 13 people?”

***TAKE THE TIME TO DISCUSS W/CONGREGATION***

As we talk about these thirteen people it becomes obvious that we don’t remember the person...we remember the life. Out of the names we recognized this morning I personally remember eleven of them. I remember those eleven because I met them and had a relationship with them. They are more than a name on a piece of paper to me. They had a life that I was involved in. Even for a short time. I visited with them, exchanged stories with them, and got to know them a little bit.

**II – PAUL’S FRIENDS:**

I believe you can see this principle at work in Paul’s letter to the church in Rome, part of which you heard read this morning. Paul has been an Apostle for a while now and has established many churches in the name of Jesus. There is a Christian church in Rome and Paul hopes to make a visit there sometime in the future. Until then he sends them a letter which makes a statement of his faith and is a blueprint for the church as to what they should believe and how they should behave.

At the end of the letter Paul greets various people in the church. That's the part you heard read this morning. Most of you probably noted that the names contained in the passage reflected the names of people in this congregation. I changed the original passage to read this way on purpose for two reasons. The first is the fact that you can't pronounce the original names contained in it. Open your Bibles to Chapter 16 and take a look for yourself. Changing the names also helps convey the message I think it should convey to you. That Paul "knew" these people.

I'm guessing there were hundreds, if not thousands, of people in the church in Rome at the time Paul wrote this letter. But out of those thousands of people he names only 27. Why...because he had a relationship of some kind with them. He knew that one was a deacon and some had worked with him spreading the Good News. He called one a dear friend and we see that he had been in prison with at least two of them. He knew that some of them were teachers and were hosting the church in their homes. He greeted them because he had a connection with them. He didn't know the rest of the church, hadn't been there, but he knew these people and he greets each of them warmly as he closes the letter.

### **III – TEXT:**

I see this same message in his letter to the church in Thessalonica.

#### **1 Thessalonians 2:17-20 (NLT)**

<sup>17</sup> Dear brothers and sisters, after we were separated from you for a little while (though our hearts never left you), we tried very hard to come back because of our intense longing to see you again. <sup>18</sup> We wanted very much to come to you, and I, Paul, tried again and again, but Satan prevented us. <sup>19</sup> After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you! <sup>20</sup> Yes, you are our pride and joy.

Unlike the church in Rome, Paul has been to the one in Thessalonica. In fact he helped found it and get it off the ground. He says that his heart has ached every since his missionary travels took him away from them and he has an intense need to see them again. Matter of fact he has made repeated attempts to get back there but something has always blocked his way. He attributes this to the devil, the enemy, who does not

want people to hear about Jesus Christ or to grow in their faith. He says this so the people he loves knows that is the only think keeping him from returning.

But it's verse 19 that I really want to look at with you. Paul is alluding to the fact that we will all one day stand before Jesus to answer for our lives here on this planet. When Paul's time arrives for his judgment he says he won't claim accolades for the churches he's formed, nor for the travels he's made. He won't ask for any glory for any of the mighty works he accomplished while on earth, even though they were in the name of Jesus Christ. He says that the thing that will make him the proudest, the thing he thinks is his crowning glory is the people who will stand with him. The people who he has ministered to and built a relationship with so they too can be with him in the presence of God. It's the people he knows that bring him pride and joy.

#### **IV – WHAT MATTERS:**

In my file of material for use at funerals is a story I'd like to share with you this morning that sums up the point I'm trying to make. It's titled, "Point of No Return," authored by a man named Wally Zink. Listen to it's message...

Whether we are ready for it or not, someday it will all come to an end. There will be no more sunrises, no minutes, hours or days.

All of the things we have collected, whether treasured or forgotten will pass on to someone else. Our wealth, fame, temporal power will shrivel to irrelevance. It will be of little value what we owned or what we saved.

Our grudges, resentments, frustrations and jealousies will evaporate like fog in the morning sun. So too will our ambitions, plans and our to-do-lists will expire. The wins and losses that once seemed so important will fade away. In the end it will matter little where we came from, or on what side of the tracks we were born. It will not matter a whit if we were beautiful, brilliant or slow in learning. Even our gender and skin color will be irrelevant.

So what will honestly matter? How will the value of our days be measured? It will not matter what we bought, but what we build; not what we got but what we gave. What will matter will not be our success, but our significance.

What will matter is not what we learned, but what we taught. What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion, courage or sacrifice that enriched, empowered or encouraged others to emulate our example.

What will matter is not our competence, but our character. What will matter is not how many people we knew, but how many will feel a lasting loss when we are gone. What will matter is how long we will be remembered, by whom and for what reasons. We are all on a journey that has a destiny, but no return.

## **V – RELATIONSHIP:**

The question we can ask ourselves about the matter of our passing is “How Long will I be remembered?” The answer to that will be based on how many lives your life has touched. How many relationships you’ve built and what they consisted of. Nothing else really matters. When you die you won’t be remembered for the amount of money you made, the kind of house you built, how smart you were, or any of the other human goals we seem to live by today in our society of power and greed. You will be remembered for how you loved others, how you helped others, how you took care of, cared for, and taught others. You will be remembered for your interaction with other humans. How did you touch lives? It’s not about property, it’s about people. It’s not about realty – it’s about relationships. We don’t remember a name...we remember a life.

Jesus Christ wasn’t rich and powerful. He didn’t leave an inheritance to his disciples. He had no biological relatives he left behind. But his life and actions touched people in such a way that his memory has lived on and affected the lives of others for over 2,000 years now. The relationship I have with him today affects my life and through me he affects the lives of others and I hope someday to stand in heaven and claim you and others as my pride and joy just as Paul did.

How about you? How many lives has your life intersected with and affected? How many lives have been changed because you’ve built a relationship with them? How many people will stand with you as you stand in front of Jesus? How long will you be remembered? Contemplate these things as you come to the communion table this morning and remember the life and death that matters not only one All Saints Day but on every day...Jesus Christ.

AMEN