

James
Part 7
James 4: 13-17
Pastor Charles Price

If you have got your Bible I am going to read to you from James Chapter 4 this morning. I am going to read initially just four verses and then some later verses in due course, but James Chapter 4 and Verse 13 down to Verse 17.

We have been looking in the Book of James for a number of weeks now. And this small section I am going to read opens up one of the most important issues that you and I need to live with and be aware of.

Because he writes in Verse 13:

“Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’

“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

“Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’

“As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.

“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.”

Now I am going to stop reading there but we will look in the early verses of Chapter 5, which continue on from this in just a few moments.

There have been a few nights this past week that have been beautifully clear. And I love the night sky and I love going out and looking up into the sky when it is clear like that. And you can see the different constellations like the Big Dipper, which happens to be right above my house at the moment.

And the big dipper, of course, is in the Ursa Major constellation. And it is made up of seven stars shaped like a big ladle, which is why the Big Dipper is the name given to it. Some places in the world call it the Plough.

I think if we were naming it today we would call it the supermarket trolley because it looks a little bit like one, if you have got a good imagination.

And the distance of those seven stars from the earth range from 58 light years away – that’s the nearest – to 114 light years away – that’s the furthest. They look as though they are all in a similar position from the earth but of course they are vastly distant from each other.

And in galactic terms those that are 114 light years away; in galactic terms, that's just our back year.

Light travels at 330,000 kilometres every second – that's seven and a half times around the world every second. And the nearest of those stars is 58 light years as opposed to 114 light years, the furthest.

On one of the walls in our home we have a national geographic map of the universe. It is in six sections, all of which lead into the next.

The first is the solar system with the sun and the eight planets that surround it. And then with an arrow that goes into the next map and shows you its position (quite small) in a map known as the sun's neighbors and there it covers all the kind of stars, basically what you can see from the earth and what you see from a telescope from the earth.

And then it goes into the Milky Way, which is the galaxy we are a part of. It has 100 billion stars in the Milky Way. And then the Milky Way goes into the local group, where the Milky Way appears small in the vast empty spaces but our nearest neighbor is Andromeda, 2.2 million light years away. That's the next galaxy to us.

And then that local group goes into the fifth map, which is the Superclusters. You can no longer see the Milky Way, it's so small. And the Superclusters are made up of all these massive clusters, most of which only have a number, don't have a name.

And then into the last part of the map, which is on the top of the poster, which is the known universe with clusters and superclusters of galaxies all moving away from us and measured at something so far like 26 billion light years across.

Why I like looking up at the stars at night is to remind myself how small I am. And in the beginning when space was created, so was time. Neither space nor time existed before the creation. That's why Genesis speaks of seven days. There were no days before creation because there was no time.

No one knows exactly when the universe came into being. The estimate of scientists at the moment is nearly 14 billion years ago. That of course is always a tentative measurement because factors by which we measure these things change and adjust.

But just supposing that the universe itself is 14 billion years old, then my lifespan within that breadth of time, if my calculations are correct, is one of 215,384,615 equal lengths of my life.

If you can imagine a book with that many pages – 215 million pages – tightly together, the size of an ordinary piece of paper like this, and this represents just my life, the width of this piece of paper, the book, if you put them all together, would have a spine that was 10,769 kilometres wide. Which means it would be a book that reads from here to India. And I would just be the width of one page.

Don't you think that it is remarkable that you are alive right now? When you consider the vastness of time and the vastness of space, that at this particular moment, not in history, but this particular moment, I happen to be alive.

I always think that's remarkable because the chances of being alive at this particular moment, in terms of the breadth of history, is very slim.

And James says in these verses we must never forget that, that this life that we are living is extremely brief.

That's why he says in Verse 14,

“What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”

Like a mist you might notice in the morning when you get up and before long it has burned itself off and it's gone. You didn't notice it go; it's just here one minute; it's gone another.

And James says life is exceedingly brief. Not only that, it's exceedingly dangerous because we do not know what a day is going to bring forth. We just don't know.

Yesterday I heard of a twenty year old man who I knew – I knew his family better than the young man himself. And he got up a few days ago full of life, full of expectancy, full of ambition, in love with a girl he was planning to marry and by 11:30 that morning he was dead in an accident at his work where he was crushed to death. A young man; the last thing he was expecting, or anybody was expecting.

It's brief.

And James writes about two things in this section. The first thing is the brevity of physical life, and we will talk about that. And then he talks about the brevity of physical wealth, which leads into Chapter 5.

First of all, the brevity of physical life, he says in Verse 13,

“Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’”

Does that ring a bell? That we think and talk that way?

“Why,” he says “you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.”

Now it's right to make plans, but James says we make our plans and we live our lives as though our life is unending and as though we are actually in charge.

And here's the folly of that in Verse 14,

“You do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”

We all know life is brief but we do not always live as though it is brief. We assume we are invincible, but we are not. We wonder if I will be the person who goes on living longer than anybody else. But we are literally here today and gone tomorrow.

The Bible talks a lot about the brevity of life. In 1 Chronicles 29:15 it says our days are like a shadow. In Job 7:6:

“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.”

Have you seen a weaver’s shuttle? My days are like that.

Job 7:7:

“My life is but a breath.”

Now I have taken two breaths in saying that.

Job 9:25:

“My days are swifter than a runner; they fly away.”

Psalms 39:11:

“Each man is but a breath.”

Psalms 102:3:

“My days vanish like smoke.”

Psalms 102:11:

“My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass.”

And in the New Testament, 1 Peter 1:24:

“All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall.”

Those images of life – a shadow, a weaver’s shuttle, a breath; they fly away like smoke, like evening shadows, like grass. And James’ picture here is you are like a mist that appears for a little while and then burns itself off.

Now I am an old man now. I shouldn't be but the calendar tells me I am. Have you ever noticed that life gets faster the older you get? When you are in your 40's it's a lot faster than it used to seem when you were 20.

I have a theory about this that may or may not be true, but I like it. Between the age of one and two, one year has been 50% of your life. So you look back over your life; it seems like a long time – 50% of your life.

When you get to the age 5, your last year has added only one fifth and so it has been only 20% of your life.

When you get to the age of 10 you have added only 10% of your life.

When you get to the age of 20, one year is only 5% of your life.

When you get to the age of 50, one year is only 2% of your life.

And so it seems extremely short and it gets faster and faster and faster, or seems to do so, just because it is a smaller portion of the whole life that you have been living.

And time is relentless. Isaac Watts wrote in a hymn,

*Time, like an ever rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten as a dream dies
At the opening of the day.*

It's a sobering thought. You know I was just thinking this last night that I will never, ever be as young again as I am this morning. This is it. I'll never be this young again. And I have never been as old as I am this morning. In all my life I have never been this old. Neither have you. And you will never be that young again.

And every year we are further down the stream, we're further, nearer to the end. And we celebrate getting there because we sing "Happy Birthday to you" every year you get a year closer to dying.

We ought to be a bit more realistic about that song.

*Happy Birthday to you
Happy Birthday to you
You're one year nearer dying
Happy Birthday to you*

I mean, what are we celebrating? You are on the way! One year closer!

I actually enjoy growing old I have decided. There are benefits. The view is different when you grow old.

If you go up the CN Tower, you know, every level you go up with give you a further view and a fuller view and a different perspective.

On the second floor (they measure it in floors) and fourth, tenth, fifteenth, twenty-fifth floor – everything is still the same, but it looks different, you can see further, you understand more until you get to the top when you are going to see the whole picture. And by that time you have got lots of experience and lots of wisdom and nobody wants your wisdom anymore.

But that's okay, because we all have to learn it ourselves. So the older you get, the more you can look back and just smile at the next generation learning the same lessons you had to learn but you can't give it to them; you have got to sit back and watch them learn them all over again.

And that can be fun if you don't take it too seriously; it's simply the way life is.

You know David, 3000 years ago, gave a remarkably accurate comment on the average lifespan even today. Because in Psalm 90:10 he said,

“The length of our days is seventy years – or eighty, if we have the strength.”

That's average. There are some of you here this morning who are in your ninety's – I know that, but the average, seventy - eighty if you have the strength.

Do you know it's a sobering thing to realize that one third of our lives have gone by the time we are 25.

That's sobering when you think wow; you think at that stage you are going to live forever.

Psalm 39:4, the psalmist writes,

“Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life.

“You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath.”

Here's David praying, “Lord, let me know, remind me how fleeting my life is because I am kidding myself I am going to be here forever.”

So let's get the message from James. Life is brief. It is as thin as one page on a book that would extend from here to India – Canada to India. And James talks about the folly of ignoring our mortality. It is foolish to do so.

Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, died of cancer at the age of 56 back in 2011. Shortly before he died he made an interesting observation. He wrote this – actually he said it and somebody else wrote it:

“Remembering that I will be dead soon is the most important tool I have ever encountered to help me to make the big choices in life. Because almost everything, all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure; these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You don’t. You are already naked.”

There is nothing like death to wake us up to what is really important is there? To put things into focus as they really are.

It was an interesting experience for me last year when my cardiologist was examining, doing a series of tests on what he described as my deteriorating heart muscle. And he said to me, “Do you want to know the truth?”

I said, “Yes, I do.”

He said, “Well I think you should know it.” He said, “You are a candidate for sudden death, so I recommend you tell your wife so she is not taken by surprise and can be aware of this. But you have a 50% chance of living for 5 years, and maybe longer,” he said.

And recently he said to me, “I think you are going to be around for a number of years.”

But the point is it is a very interesting experience to go through, and I am still breathing today. My heart is still beating, though aided by this incredible little machine implanted in my chest, highly intelligent machine. My wife tells me it is more intelligent than I am, which doesn’t say a lot. But it is.

Others of you have faced similar news. What goes on when you face this kind of news?

Steve Jobs also said,

“For 33 years I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself if today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today? Whenever the answer has been no for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something.”

Now of course if we all knew today was our last day, we probably would do some different things. We can’t live every day, “This may be my last,” but it is a good thing to ask every once in a while and like Steve Jobs said, “if for too long I have said no, I wouldn’t do what I am doing today,” then you need to reorient your priorities.

I wouldn't like to say a last good-bye to my family every night in case I am not there in the morning - become hypochondriac if I started acting like that. But we must get life and death into its right perspective.

Somebody has said that no one on their deathbed ever says, "I wish I had spent more time in the office" because on your deathbed that is not actually as important as it seemed to be when you ruined your family by being in the office far too long.

And somebody else has said if you live each day as if it was your last, one day you will be right. But when that day is, is a secret that we are not all privy to. But we had better live as though it might end today and if it ends today, everything is good.

Jesus told a parable in Luke Chapter 12 about a man who was successful in producing good crops and making lots of money. Well, good for him! Nothing wrong with that. Business, making money, is entirely legitimate.

So he came to a conclusion, "I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones." Good business sense. If your barns are expanding, build some more.

But we call this story Jesus told "the parable of the rich fool." And the reason why he was a fool was because he said (this is in Luke 12:19),

"I will say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"

In other words, his focus was on what was on the end of his nose, just ahead of him. And that night God said to him,

"You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you."

The issue is not that he was rich. His issue was he had built his life on his riches and this had become the sum total of what his life was all about.

And he was a fool because when God tapped him on the shoulder, "Tonight, you have an appointment; come here," he was ill-prepared.

And if that is your life, you are a fool too. This man had made full provision for life but he had made no provision for death, which is an upside-down world that is being created.

Now here in James 4, James is actually addressing this to business people because that is the examples he uses in Verse 13.

"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.'"

Well, business, making money, is okay but there is nothing that blinds us like experiencing success. We are most vulnerable when we are most successful.

You are like a mist; you are here today, gone tomorrow, but sometimes in our success we are so caught up in the business that has become the occupation of our lives, we have become blinded to the fact that this life is as thick as a piece of paper on a book that extends from Canada to India – that’s all; that’s the width of my life. And I had better make sure that there are things outside of this life that I am settled about and have certainties about.

C.S. Lewis said there are only three things we can do about death. You can ignore it, you can fear it, or you can desire it.

And the Gospel of Jesus Christ actually encourages us to desire it. It is the fool who ignores it.

In Philippians 1:21 Paul wrote there,

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

“If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet, what shall I choose? I don’t know what to do. I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.”

I desire to die – that will be a much better option. But it is more necessary for you if I remain in the body.

Here’s a man caught in a dilemma. Do I live or do I die? If I live I am going to be useful – that’s okay. If I die, which is my preference, as he says, “I will be with Christ.”

So if you ask me if I want to live or die, if I happen to have to die today, that actually would be my preference – that’s what Paul says.

Now if you met somebody who said to you, “I don’t know if I should live or die – I think I’d rather die,” what would you say to them?

I think you would say, “Have you been to your doctor lately?” You would start to be a little concerned that they were becoming suicidal.

But actually death is something to embrace, something wonderful, Paul says. “I would rather be, because to be absent from this body, out of this world, all the mess of it, all the sin of it, all the corruption of it, I am going to be present with the Lord.”

I had a good friend who lived on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. He was a brilliant artist. And I once visited an exhibition of his paintings at a prestigious gallery on 5th Avenue in New York City. And his pictures were used all around the world.

Once he was on assignment in London, in England when I was still living in England, and we arranged to meet. And I went down to London and we met for half a day together. And two or three days later he died, like that, just suddenly.

His wife asked me if I would conduct his funeral, which I did. And when I arrived for the funeral she gave me a letter that he was writing to me when he died. And I have kept that letter. Actually I gave the original back to his wife – I photocopied it – and I will tell you what it said.

It said,

“Dear Charles, It was lovely to see you, a familiar face in a sea of unfamiliar faces. What a day to come when I will see the face of Jesus. I wonder if I will recognize Him when I see Him. And I wonder whether He will recognize me”

And he failed to put the period at the end of that sentence because at that precise moment he died and fell from his chair.

I will never write a letter like that because that is as close as you can get to being ready. At that point, absent from the body, present with the Lord.

Probably the most desirable thing in the world is to be ready for death. We will never know how to live until the sting has been extracted from death.

And we don't fear it; we face it.

I remember mentioning this about three years ago, but William Shakespeare addresses this in one of the most famous parts of his play “Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark.”

I had to memorize this at school when I was a kid, so I have written it down here just to make sure I get it right. But some of you know it. It begins,

“To be or not to be,”

(Meaning, to live or not to live.)

*To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?*

Let me pause there. Here is a man wanting to die because the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, as he puts it, have made life so difficult for him, so he considers ending them.

But then he comes to the dilemma:

*To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;*

And he goes on further than that, but what he is saying is this:

To be or not to be, to live or not to live; well I'd like to not live because of these slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that have been set against me. But if I die, what happens? I don't know. In that sleep of death, what dreams may come?

And he is saying, "If I live, it's bad; if I die, it's going to be worse – well, it may be worse, rather."

Compare that to Paul. Paul writes in Philippians 1:

"For me to live" (to be) "is Christ and to die" (to not to be) "is gain."

To be or not to be; you ask Paul: which would you like? He says, "Not to be" because to not to be is not the end of something; it is simply the transition into something that is even better.

And as I said just now, we won't know how to live until we actually know how to die. We face squarely the reality of our mortality. And just supposing one the way home this afternoon, just supposing I ran into another car and I am no longer alive today, never see another sunset, am I okay about that? Am I ready for that?

Am I aware of what Paul speaks of, this security that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord? Because this life is only one page on that massive book, it is only a temporary part of my existence – born here, live here, will die here, and after death. It is appointed unto man once to die and after death the judgement, and from the judgement the eternal position that God has set aside for us - if we are in Christ, the eternal security that comes from that.

Paul mocks death when he speaks about death. Where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory?

So how do we live this life? Well, James goes on to say in Verses 15 and 16,

"Instead..."

That's instead of all this, "I'll go here, I'll go there, I'll do this, I'll do that, I'll make money, etc." Instead of all this, Verse 15:

"Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'

"As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil."

So here is the important clause. You should say, "If it's the Lord's will, we will do this, we will do that."

Why? Because the Lord has a will for your life.

The two letters D.V. now refer to a format for storing digital video, but when I was young the letters D.V. stood for Deo Volente, which is Latin for God willing.

So when I was a kid in England, if churches announced some meetings of some kind they would usually follow the announcement with the letters in brackets D.V., Deo Volente, meaning God willing.

Missionaries would write their newsletters home and say, "I plan to be back at home for four months next year (D.V). Even my mother used to write to me and said, "We are looking forward to seeing you soon (D.V).

In fact when I met Hilary she would say, "What does that mean?"

"It's Deo Volente."

"I didn't know your mother spoke Latin."

"She doesn't, but it's just the standard 'God Willing.'"

There is fantastic security in that. This, by the way, comes from James Chapter 4. And there is fantastic security in that.

And it avoids the folly of thinking that I can plan, create my own security, that I am somehow invincible. It is to say, what I am going to do (if you go back to the beginning of this passage),

"Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money"

That would be an entirely fine thing to say provided you put at the end of it D.V., God willing.

Because, "What is your life?" he says. You are a mist here today, gone tomorrow.

And it will be only meaningful to say "God willing" when your life has been placed in surrender at the feet of Jesus Christ and you say, "My life, whether it's for 20 years (like that young man I

mentioned just now), whether it's going to be 50 years or 80 years or 95 years, that doesn't matter because my life belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ; my life is in His hands. And whether I live or die, He is present and active and at work, and I am secure in Him.

And then in keeping with this theme of the brevity of physical life, he goes on in Chapter 5:1 to talk about the brevity of physical wealth. These two things go together.

If you are wrapped up in this life, a sure symptom of being wrapped up in this life is an overly concern about the material security of this life. And so he says – and I will just comment on this briefly – if you are in life group you can follow this through, as you will, in the life groups that meet this week.

Verse 1 says,

“Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you.

“Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes.

“Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.

“Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

“You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.

“You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.”

That is quite a devastating statement he makes there. I will just comment on the main point and that is that this is a devastating critique of people who are not only wealthy people, but greedy people.

Not all wealthy people are greedy people. But greed is addictive and when a person has become greedy, they will become willing to break any promise, betray any allegiance, rationalize any indiscretion. They are willing to damage their family and even ruin their health in the process of obtaining more.

It is addictive. And greedy people are usually blind to their own materialism. Jesus said in Luke 12 [vs. 15],

“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

It doesn't, so why are you wasting all this energy and getting so drained in the process?

Colossians 3:5 speaks of greed, which is idolatry.

Now of course business makes the world go around. We need business. We are all beneficiaries of it. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with that. In fact it is intrinsically right and necessary.

And the Bible never condemns in any way business enterprise or industry or hard work or making money. These are good things but they come with a warning and it's a warning we must take heed to.

And I will give you three things about these people in James 5, and it's because they don't face the brevity of life, they don't face the brevity of wealth.

Three things: Firstly, they were covetous, and you can look these through later. (As I said, the life groups will look at these in the course of the week.)

They were covetous. Verse 3:

“You have hoarded wealth in the last days.”

Not used it; you have hoarded it.

I read every week The Economist Magazine. And there was an article a while back called “The Culture of Greed.” And it talked about how that greed has eaten away at our souls.

This is an interesting comment for a secular magazine – eaten away at our souls and brought us to the brink of economic collapse, because, as Paul said, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

And when we have a love of money, we will break the rules we once lived by in order to pursue it. Don't kid ourselves that we won't.

Now Hebrews encourages us in Chapter 13:5 to keep our lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.

So they were covetous. Secondly, they were corrupt as a result. He talks about “the wages you failed to pay the workmen, the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You lived in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened up yourselves.”

Now presumably they agreed to pay a certain amount to the workmen for harvesting their fields and then reneged on that agreement. So the rich have the poor over a barrel in that sense – they can exploit them, use them, and then do they give them what they deserve or do they not?

And Scripture is very clear on this principle. Leviticus 19:13:

“Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.”

And in Deuteronomy 24:14:

“Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy...Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is...counting on it.”

The rich have the power to call the shots and they have become corrupted because once you have contaminated your soul with a love of money you have opened the door to corruption.

And then thirdly, lastly, they were careless because in Verse 5,

“You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.”

That is, you have feathered your own nest by swindling the poor that you might live at idle ease and self-indulgence and have become completely unconcerned about the needs of the world, completely unconcerned about the needs of those around you.

But the cries of the harvesters, Verse 4 says, have reached the ears of the Almighty.

God who is seeing, God who is hearing, and God who is an avenging God, a God of justice, and He has got their ear and He has received their message.

And James says, “You be careful.”

Now there is more in that passage; if we had time we could have spent a whole session just on that.

But putting those two sections together, as I think they should be, what James is saying is this: life is short. Be ready to die. Don't be afraid of it, don't ignore it. Be ready to die. Talk about death. It's quite useful to talk about death and be ready for it.

And live in the meantime; if death is here and you are here, live in the meantime in the will of God. You say, “If it is God's will we will do this, that and the other and be around tomorrow, if it is God's will.” D.V., subject to His will because your life is lived in His will and according to His will.

But if life is short, wealth is transient. Don't break your neck accumulating it. Don't violate your conscience accumulating it. Use it to serve, not to be served.

There is a madness in materialism. There is a sanity in stewardship and generosity.

So what is your life? What is your life? A mist here today and gone tomorrow? A means of blessing others, not grabbing and exploiting others? That when this stage of the journey – and it is an exciting adventurous journey – when this stage of the journey is over – be it today, be it 20, 30, 40, 50 years down the road from now – you move absent from the body to be present with

the Lord, and to enjoy whatever the next stage is going to be. And we have a few clues, but we don't have details. But it is going to be a lot better than this one.

And investing in eternity in this life, laying up treasure in heaven, as Jesus said, rather than on earth, is the best way to invest this life now here on earth.

Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, we come to You this morning, thankful for the gift of life. Thank You for all the potential of every life in this place. Thank You every one of us is not only created by You, but loved by You. Loved personally, loved deeply.

And You know the length of our days. Your Word says not a sparrow falls to the ground but that "it's the will of My Father who is in heaven and how much more valuable are you than many sparrows?"

Thank You for that security. Thank You for that sense of meaning and forgive us that all the glitter of this world can become so attractive to us. Thank You for those who do make and run business, who do contribute to the safe and stable economy that we so want to be part of. We are not fearful of what is coming next, physically, materially, but help us Lord to have our eyes open to the many seductive traps that can suck us in and destroy our own souls.

Help us, we pray, always to be stewards and never owners. And I pray that this will work out in our lives practically and personally...