

## The Things That Count Most In Life.

Text: Jer 9:23-24

Suggested Hymns:

Tan: 352, 330, 332, 848, 163

Ade: 822, 208, 330, 332, 163

- 1) To understand and know God that He exercises loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness
- 2) To use your wisdom, your sight, and your understanding to the glory of god.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Jeremiah 9:23-24, <sup>23</sup> *Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; <sup>24</sup> But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

With Septuagesima Sunday we enter upon a new cycle in the church year. We turn our backs upon the wonderful manifestation of Christ during the Epiphany season and face the dark night of Gethsemane and bleak Calvary.

The three Sundays prior to Ash Wednesday are the time of preparation for this most solemn of all the seasons in our church year. The texts which we will study on these Sundays deal in a general way with the great subjects of man's sin and the forgiving grace of God.

Man's sin and the forgiving grace of God are the two great facts with which everybody who wants to live a worth-while life must understand. They count for most in life.

We cannot possibly escape from the fact of sin. On every turn of the road, on the right and on the left, we stand face to face with the grim fact of sin. It is the curse of the world. It has entered deeply into the every-day life of every man, woman, and child. Sin takes all the joy out of life. It is the reason for death.

Neither man's wisdom, nor his might, nor his riches are able to battle successfully with this grim foe. Only the sunshine of God's forgiving grace and tender mercy can dispel the dark night of sin and make life worth living. They are the things which really count in life.

Let us then consider these thoughts. The things that count most in life. May the Lord bless our meditation.

**1. The Things That Count Most In Life -  
Are To Understand And To Know God,  
That He Exercises Loving Kindness, Judgment, And Righteousness**

The people to whom our text was originally addressed did not realise at the time that they had made a total failure of their lives. When Jeremiah warned them of the impending doom and told them that they would see the wreckage of their lives, they said in Jeremiah 18:18, *“Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come and let us attack him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.”*

They were entrenched behind the pride of their own wisdom, might and riches. They felt secure.

But their house of cards collapsed. Cries of despair, weeping, and moaning filled the air when their city was destroyed, their temple laid waste, and they were led into the Babylonian Captivity. All the things of which they boasted vanished, just as the ice and the snow melts in the hot rays of the sun.

It is the nature of people to exult themselves. In his first epistle Saint John calls it *“the boasting of what he has and does.”*<sup>1</sup> Such boasting shoots up from the pride of our sinful nature. We tend to forget God and claim credit for everything. The Lord warns us here against such boasting. No wise person ought to boast of his wisdom, for by our own wisdom we will not find a right relationship with God.

The strong man ought not to boast of his strength, for without God he has none. The rich man ought not to boast of his riches, for they are God's gift. In using our gifts for ourselves, we forget the Giver. There dare not be any trust or boasting in the creature because it can only lead to hell.

There is only one boast anyone dare make. There is only one boast God invites us to make. God invites us to boast in Him. At one time Moses begged to see God in all of His unveiled glory. God's answer was to show Moses His goodness and to proclaim to Moses His name. For through His name God has made Himself known. To know His name is to know the fullness of the Lord's mercy and grace.

To know His name is to know Christ and to trust in Him as the Saviour. This is true wisdom, strength, and riches. So Paul confessed, "***May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.***"<sup>2</sup> Such boasting is a confession that we live by the grace of God and that whatever we are or have is by His grace alone.

If only Judah had learned such boasting, she would have lived. The Lord makes no distinctions. Be it Judah or her pagan neighbours, because of their unbelief they all stand under equal condemnation. Therefore all must be punished.

The same is true for any person. Whoever stands outside of the grace of God suffers the judgment God's holy law pronounces upon all sinners. For apart from the cover of His grace, there is no salvation.

Wisdom, might and riches are not the things that count most in life. Surely they count for something. But they count for something only if they are brought into proper relation with that which counts most in life. And what is it that counts most in life?

Our text says, "***Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;***<sup>24</sup> ***But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.***

The words, "***That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD,***" is more than to acknowledge that there is a God. It is more than to appreciate the fact that in some way you are responsible to God. It is more than to realise that in some way you will have to give an account of yourself before the tribunal of God.

What you need to know is that it is the Lord who exercises loving-kindness. It is very easy to speak glibly of the loving-kindness of God when all is well. You can speak in hymns of praise of a God who provides for the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field, so long as your pantry is well stocked and your pay-cheque comes in, and your rent and your interest can be collected.

But let all of these things stop, let the day come when you are like the cattle starving to death in a drought, and your songs of praise will cease, and you will hang your harps on the willows at the brooks of Babylon, unless you have learned something more about the lovingkindness of God than you see in nature.

You must ***“understand and know Me”*** our text says. The words which Jeremiah uses, indicates that you must have more than an academic knowledge concerning certain facts about God. You must ***“know and understand Me.”*** You must have a real insight. You must have heart-knowledge, not only head-knowledge. It means you must have faith and trust in Christ.

You must know just as the great apostle knew, who in the face of bitter adversity said in Romans 8:38-39, <sup>38</sup> ***For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*** When this heart-knowledge has gripped you, then you will have laid hands on that which really counts in life.

Impossible, you say? How can you steady your heart in all the adverse experiences of life? The prophet indicates how you can do this. He speaks of God’s judgment and righteousness. God’s loving-kindness rests on God’s judgment and His righteousness.

God has judged the world. St. Paul expresses God’s judgment in these words, ***“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”***<sup>3</sup> God’s judgment of the world was pronounced on Calvary’s holy hill, where God ***made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***<sup>4</sup> God’s judgment of the world was published when Christ, who was put to death for our sin, was raised again for our justification.

It is a righteous verdict. All of God’s claims against you have been satisfied. Jesus has done for you what you ought to have done, but did not do. Jesus has

made satisfaction for what you did, but should not have done. So there is nothing standing between you and God. Believe that. Take God at His word.

There will be many questions arising in your heart. And if you approach Calvary's holy hill in the conceit of your own wisdom, you will reject everything that I have said.

The Gospel of Jesus is foolishness to the children of darkness. But why judge God in His infinite wisdom with your finite mind? Why judge God by what you think you see, instead of judging Him by what He said? Why take your textbooks on science and on philosophy and on psychology to the foot of the cross? Go to Calvary on your knees and see the gift of His love and take God at His Word. Then your heart will rejoice, and you will have found that which counts most in life.

## **2. The Things That Count Most In Life - To Use Your Wisdom, Your Sight, And Your Understanding To The Glory Of God.**

When you have fastened your anchor to this Rock of Ages, your life will be definitely worth while. Then you will put the blessings of God into His service. Wisdom and might and riches are wonderful gifts of God. Wisdom and might and riches are the controlling forces in life. Education, position, and money are the things that people strive after most.

A diploma or degree from a recognised college or university, a position of prominence in your business or your profession, an accumulation of financial resources which makes you more or less independent — given these things, what more can you desire?

My friends, in themselves these things count for little. The mere possession of wisdom and might and riches will not satisfy your heart. The fact that you have stored away in your mind an encyclopedic knowledge of things means little. What are you doing with your knowledge? — that is what counts.

The fact that you have climbed up to a position of rank in your business or your profession does not mean much. What are you doing now that you have arrived there? — that is what counts. The fact that you have accumulated riches does not mean much for real happiness. What are you doing with your riches? — that is what counts.

The pity of it is that too many people misuse God's blessings in the service of self and sin. Too many people use their knowledge and their education to mock and to scoff at God's creation, and the wonderful revelation of God's Word telling us of His Law and Gospel which shows us His love for every person.

How many people who go to university will you find on bended knee, praying the litany before the cross of the dying Redeemer? How we squander our time and our strength to find a place for ourselves in our business and in our profession, and have no time and no strength left for God in the service of His church!

How can we plan to save and to hoard so that we may enjoy the good things of life, but have little or nothing to give to the Lord! We all know that these are facts. The pity of it is that we often misuse the blessings of God and put them into the service of self!

Let us learn anew to find real joy and happiness in putting ourselves and the numerous blessings with which God has blessed us into the service of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Let your devotion to Jesus be the controlling force and the impelling motive of your life. Then you will have found that which really counts in life.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,

*Thy works, not mine, O Christ,  
Speak gladness to this heart;  
They tell me all is done;  
They bid my fear depart.*

*Thy righteousness, O Christ,  
Alone can cover me;  
No righteousness avails  
Save (except) that which is of Thee. Amen.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 John 2:16

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 6:14

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21