

October 8 Adult Spiritual Growth Class Synopsis

Life Worth Living Study – Week 5 – Chapter 2 Where are we starting from? / Erik Koroneos' sermon "Time"

Chapter 2 of Life Worth Living is entitled "Where are we starting from?" It presents an example of a modern world's vision of life worth living as conveyed in a Walgreens advertisement – one that is happy and healthy. Also included in tandem is a long life. The authors shares that "long, happy and healthy" is pitched to us incessantly from the modern advertisements from the 'wellness' industry that is estimated to be worth \$1.5 trillion globally. This is the vision that counts as wisdom in comparison to the unreflective impluses that dominate our culture. It is difficult to pause and consider the merits of this vision when we are so busy chasing after it.



The authors put forth the concept of the good life tangle. They state that the power of the Walgreens vision is that it builds a whole life around longevity, happiness, and health: a fulfilling career, daily rhythms of work and rest, a good diet and exercise, meaningful relationships, emotional regulation, resiliency, and even virtue and character of sort. It is called "the good life tangle", i.e., being happy will make you healthier and help you live longer. Being healthier will yield happiness and longevity. Even being a good person will make you happier and healthier and help you live longer. This vision leads to a reasoning that this is why you should be a good person because it will make you happy. It is a universe of life with no trade-offs between doing well, doing good and feeling good. However, humanity's history is one that is just the opposite. Doing good can hurt your chances of doing well. The good life is not always long, happy and healthy. Many of the lives we most admire are not the sort of lives we are actually pursuing.

Not Long Dr. Martin Luther King Jr

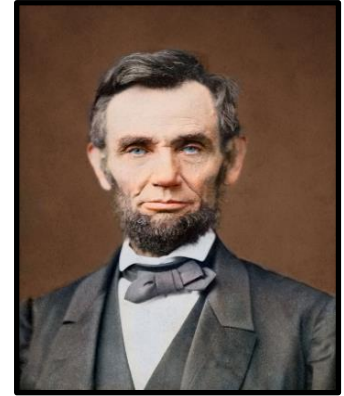


Martin Luther King Jr. is given as an example of one's life not long. On the night before he was killed, King delivered a speech to his fellow protesters. He told the audience that he was well aware that his life was still in danger. He said: "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life – longevity has its place, But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!" King did not want a short life but he did not make the decision to pursue a long one. He saw something else mattered more than the length of his life

Abraham Lincoln is presented as an example of one's life not happy. Lincoln suffered from crushing, persistent melancholy. He would go through periods of deep depression, starting with the death of his mother at age nine. Lincoln led the United States through the dreadful violence and death of the Civil War. He once lamented, "if there is a worse place than hell, I am in it."

Yet Lincoln chose that place and took the burden on himself. He did not seek out sadness but he did not run from it either. He did not let fear of it keep him from doing what he saw as his duty. Knowing and feeling the tragedy of death, and wrestling with a sadness that would never go away for good equipped Lincoln to lead with gravity, persistence, and significant (even if imperfect) compassion and honesty.

**Not Happy
Abraham Lincoln**



Lady Constance Lytton is presented as an example of one's life not healthy. She was wholly devoted to the cause of winning women the right to vote in the United Kingdom, even at the expense of her health and weakened heart. She joined other suffragettes in hunger strikes while imprisoned for their activism. She, being the sister of a member of House of Lords, was released by the authorities given her state of health and social position.

**Not Healthy
Lady Constance Lytton**



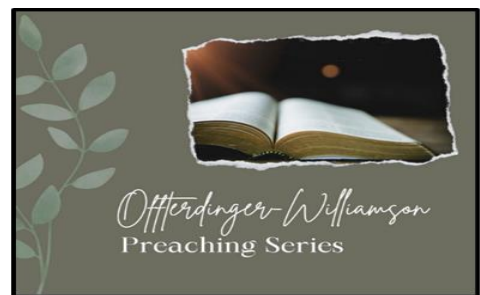
She was not deterred and wanted to expose the unjust favoritism for what it was. She then disguised herself as a poor seamstress named Jane Warton. She was arrested and began another hunger strike. As Jane Warton, she was repeatedly force-fed. When her identity was discovered, it created a public scandal that led to suffragette prisoners given the same privileges as political dissidents. It also led to eventual legislative compromises on suffrage and the final right to vote. Unfortunately she never recovered physically from the hunger strikes, suffering from heart seizures and bouts of illness. While she was by no means the central hero to the British suffrage movement, her story of dedication and sacrifice to one of the twentieth century's great justice movements gives inspiration.

The authors note that short, sad, and sickly are not advocated. However, the lives of King, Lincoln and Lytton, suggest there are other things worth living for even if they cost you your health, your happiness or your life.

The questions at the end of the chapter ask us to reflect on one or two people who we deeply admire and why, and ask if "long, happy, healthy" describe their lives. Also asked is what ways does the Walgreens' vision (long, healthy and happy) influence our discernment? What might we value more?

As followers of Christ, we know that life may not be long, happy and healthy. Even Christ tells us in Matthew 5:11: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake."

The last sermon of the Offterdinger-Williamson preaching series from this past summer, entitled "Time", speaks to how we are called to live as children of God. Erik Koroneos uses the text of Psalm 90, which comes from Moses, noting that God, in teaching us that our days are numbered, gives us a heart of wisdom.



**(407) First Presbyterian Church
Lynchburg, Worship, July 16,**

Erik reminds us of the brevity of life as shared in *James 4:14: 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.* Yet we live our lives as if they are infinite in this world. In the backdrop of our own funeral, Erik presents questions that we may ask:

What will I be remembered for?

What has my life stood for?

What am I doing with my life each day?

Have I made a difference in the life of others?

Psalm 90 provides three core tenets on how to live a more meaningful life. Moses begins the psalm acknowledging that the Lord is our dwelling place even in the midst of wandering for 40 years and having no physical home. He is our ultimate refuge. The first tenet is that our fulfillment comes from our relationship with God – nothing is more important. We are a new creation crucified with Christ. While it is easy to get bogged down with the busyness and challenges of life, we are to live with intentionality, always making time for God and His purpose.

Moses asks God to teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Living our lives with this heart of wisdom is the second tenet, which leads us to live with purpose. It is what Christ does in and through us that matters. Erik shared the story of William Borden, a young man from a very wealthy Chicago family, who dedicated his life to Christian missionary after seeing the world's suffering during a year long trip abroad prior to entering Yale in 1905. While pursuing his goal of becoming a missionary, Borden, in his freshman year, gathered 150 classmates into weekly Bible studies. By his senior year, 1,000 of 1,300 students at Yale were drawn in. As a sophomore, he established the first rescue mission in New Haven. As a seaport midway between New York and Boston, the city provided irregular work for an increasing population of hobos and riffraff. Saloons, gambling halls, and brothels were a temptation for many a student. Borden engaged them in the Yale Hope Mission instead. In one year, 14,000 men attended gospel meetings, 17,000 received a warm meal, and 8,000 found a place to sleep. At the end of his senior year, Borden turned down a number of lucrative job offers with his heart set toward ministry, and not wealth, and went to Princeton Seminary. He graduated with his decision to minister to millions of Muslims through the China Inland Mission. While studying Arabic in preparation in Egypt, he contracted spinal meningitis and died at the age of 25. In his Bible were the inscribed words: 'no resolve, no retreat, no regrets'. Erik asked and answered: "Did William Bolden accomplish his goal as a missionary in China? No. Did he meet his purpose in life? Yes."

Erik shared that the sum of what we do will exceed far more that our imagination as long as we abide in Christ. Christ tells us in *John 15:5: "If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

Moses speaks of living in gratitude near the end of the psalm: 'Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.'. This is the third tenet. We are to

start each morning, no matter age or life circumstances giving thanks – ‘This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!’

Borden once asked a hesitant student considering a life for Christ through missions, “Are you willing to be made willing?” As faithful and willing followers to Christ, Erik shared that what we do in this life echoes through eternity.

Looking ahead – Sunday October 22

Read Chapter 3 ‘Who do we answer to?’ Pages 33-48

Answer “Your Turn Questions” on Page 48

