‘Give God Your Best; Knowing that God’s Best Is Yet to Come.’

Anchor verses:

“[20] But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, [twenty-one] who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.” Philippians 3:20-21

“ I Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, but at the proper time manifested, *even* His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior,” Titus 1:1-3

“[17] And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

[23] Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, [twenty-four] since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Colossians 3:17, 23-24

Closing verse:

“[18] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be* compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Romans 8:18

Sermon outline:

Greetings and Introduction to message:

Good morning!

Opening prayer.

Please join me in prayer.

Heavenly Father. We love you so much. Thank you for allowing us to gather together in your name this morning. We ask you God to consecrate our time, open our hearts, and minds as we open your Word. This we pray in the blessed name of your son, our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Introduction:

Like some of you, I have entered the stage in life where many of my parts are approaching their extended warranty.

Knees, wrists, back, and most recently both shoulders. Unfortunately, after the repairs have been done, the finished body work is often left up to us, and it is indeed labor intensive.

Two weeks ago I was having a conversation with a Pastor friend of mine; during our talk he mentioned the similarities between physical therapy and our individual walk of faith. He highlighted how the principles of hard work and dedication are essential elements for a successful outcome in both.

As you can imagine, the long months of rigorous physical therapy I endured was a labor of love. However, there was a certain joy in knowing that the desired end was in sight. The collective message from each of my physical therapist was "keep giving it your best effort every day; and believe that in time it is going to get better and better."

It is like that as Christ following believers, isn't it? Every day we put in the hard work, knowing that at the end our reward is eternity with Jesus, and everything will indeed be better.

This is our theme for this morning's message.

Message:

Our title is:

Slide One

'Give God Your Best; Knowing that God's Best is Yet to Come'.

Our first Scripture text is taken from Philippians 3:20-21:

Trevor, you did such a wonderful job reading our passages together the first time I brought God's Word, that it was an easy decision to have you do a little 'choral reading' again this Sunday.

Here we go.

Slide Two

"[20] But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, [twenty-one] who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

Beautiful. I believe you sound even better today.

We'll leave that up there for a moment.

That sounds so simple, doesn't it?

Believe that God's Word is absolute truth. Trust that He is in complete control, and that all of our earthly tears, trials and tribulations will be forever washed away.

The big question is 'how do we live that out in our day to day'?

I am so glad you asked.

Here is our first principle.

Message Principles:

Slide Three

Principle One:

Begin each day with an intentional prayer to the Most High God.

A little over a year ago I had the blessing of preaching the new year message. I shared the 'feet First's Spiritual Principal..

The application is simple. Before our feet hit the floor each and every morning, we dedicate the day to God, and ask Him to fill us with the Holy Spirit.

When we do this, we practice what the Apostle Paul was encouraging the early Church in Phillippi to do. Which was, to trust and believe that God is who He says He is, and that they were not merely citizens of the world, but more importantly they were also citizens of Heaven. Like the early church in Philippi, we are also the undeserving recipients of a Divine inheritance. This means our legacy is Heaven. We are only sojourners here. This earth is not our home. And one day, these earthly bags of breath and bone will be gloriously transformed into our Heavenly bodies. No tears of sorrow, only tears of joy. No death. No more aches and pains. No creaky knees, or stiff necks. No heart trouble, no aching backs, no cancer or bad eyes. I will actually have hair again. I miss my afro. I had a special relationship with my afro. It wasn't Dr. J worthy, but it was still worth a relationship. Does that make me shallow? Don't answer that, please.

But seriously, a significant piece of our daily walk of faith is relational.

Think about it. Every day we enter into relationships either formal or informal. Our relationships can sometimes reflect the level of our faith in Christ. They can be miles wide but only inches deep.

And the most important relationship we can ever have is with Jesus the Christ. How deep is ours this morning?

I've seen this manifest in my life. I love my in-laws. I'm in church so it is okay to say that. Last fall my father-in-law really stepped it up, he took our relationship to a whole other level. After my rotator cuff surgery on my right shoulder last September, Craig had his left rotator cuff surgically repaired in October. That is a whole other level.

Okay, that might be a little bit of a stretch (so to speak) but you get my point. What the reciprocal surgery led to was a deepening of our already solid relationship. The bond between us became better as a result of a shared relational experience. It deepened significantly.

I asked a friend of mine who leads a powerful Discipleship Ministry called 'Always Going', what God had placed on his heart the last few months. He shared how God had revealed the importance of building solid relationships in our daily work as disciples of Christ.

As Christ followers, this is what we do, it's our job, and yes it takes a fair amount of…you guessed it, work.

This brings us to our second principle.

Principle Two:

Slide Four

Believe in your heart that God desires your best.

I have coached several sports for many years and I often tell my athletes, "I don't know how to make you mediocre; but If you're willing I can make you good, if you're good I can make you better, and if you get better I can make you your best; but you have to be willing to give it your best."

That is exactly what God requires of us. He desires our willingness to give Him our best, and He desires for us to know in our hearts that His best is yet to come.

You are probably thinking; okay Phillip, is there a Biblical reference for this illustration? Yes. There is.

Let us look quickly at Colossians 3:17, 23-24.

Are you ready?

Slide Five

"[17] And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

[23] Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, [twenty-four] since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Nicely done church.

Did you pick up on the word repeated from our first passage?

Inheritance. Our Heavenly legacy is promised to us. And God never breaks His promises. Never. How many of us sitting here

today can lay claim to that? My goodness, we may have broken a promise on our way to church this morning. I think I did.

Paul states this simply, directly, honestly. Yes, he was preaching to the Church in Colossi, but clearly, he is also speaking to you and me.

Think about how often we either forget or under value the importance of glorifying God in everything we do. 'Word or deed' encompasses all that we do. Even the mundane minutia of everyday. It matters not a bit how small or large the job or task is. "Whatever we do", means exactly that, "whatever we do."

God desires our best. Our best intentions along with our best efforts. Our daily 'work' is not, nor ever should be for mankind, but instead for the *Creator* of all mankind. God The Father. Whatever work you/we do, we need to work at it with all our heart, for God.

Please hear this.

Yes. We are talking about work here, but not work in the secular sense.

We cannot work our way into heaven. We cannot earn our way there, or make our way there by being nice, or donate our way to the doors of Glory. Good people do not get to Heaven by merely being good. We can never be good enough to get to heaven.

Only Saved people get to Heaven. Loved ones, we must be crystal clear on this absolute truth. We are saved by Grace alone, through Faith alone in Christ alone. Period.

Along our path of sanctification is where we labor for God's Glory. Every day of our Christian lives we work to glorify Him.

There is an old adage; "if you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life". I want us to turn that on its' head; 'when you love God, all the work you do is for Him'.

Many of us have moved into the retirement phase of life. The daily grind is behind us; but for God, we still have work to do. Turn to your neighbor and tell them; *'We still have work to do'*.

Let us be honest; how often are we afforded the opportunity to glorify God each and every day? Do we do so? Probably not. And sadly, we don't far more often than we realize, or truth to tell, more times than we are willing to admit. Right?

What about all those times when we are engaged in a casual conversation with friends, or those who may become our friends? Perfect time to give God some Glory. How about those brief moments when someone flashes across our minds and we don't give them a call, or shoot them an email, or send them a quick text, just because. Those occasions when we are standing in line at a store, or at an event, and we fail to engage in conversation. The countless times that someone asks us 'how we are doing?' What stops us from saying'; 'I'm doing better than I deserve;, or 'Jesus is blessing me'? When the idea of praying for or with someone, tugs at our hearts, and we ignore it. Or toss it off as heartburn. Uh huh. Holy Spirit heartburn. Right?

Come on now, if you can't say Amen say Ouch.

How awesome it would be for us to reflect the character of God. God's Word tells us in Ephesians that we are to "be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven us."

Just be kind, be tender hearted, forgive. Be willing to listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Allow me to illustrate this for you.

The Lord turned me around in the fall of 2012, before that I was living apart from God as a heathen, a pagan, a 'cultural Christian'. I had walked an aisle when I was thirteen, but I quickly walked away from God. He turned me around, but that did not mean I did not try hard to turn back the other way. The sinfully selfish secular life of being a Cultural Christian was so much easier. But praise be to God, He had blessed me with a Jesus loving wife, and He kept putting strong Christians in my path who loved me and began to hold me accountable. And little by little, my heart of stone became a heart of flesh.

God led me to Moody Theological Seminary, which had an immediate and transformational impact on not only my career but more importantly my eternal life. While working on a holiday film in 2018 for BET, a film titled 'Holiday Heist'. The director and the executive producer of the film were both Christ followers. During my weeks on the set I was prompted to share my faith with several members of the cast and crew. And much to my surprise, they also shared their faith stories with me. God at Work.

During the past few months Heather and I have been led by the Holy Spirit to pray with our servers when we are out to eat. Have we done this when dining with our three teenagers? No. God's still working on us to that end. But we did have the opportunity last December when we were in Lake Geneva Wisconsin, celebrating our anniversary, to pray with our server. We simply asked her if we could pray about anything for her, and she quickly told us that her best friend had just lost everything she owned in an apartment fire. At that very moment the gentlemen who was bussing our table arrived, and we asked him the same question, and he shared that his mom had been suffering with Congestive Heart Failure. So, we all prayed, right there, on that chilly December Sunday morning. That was a God thing.

But the kicker happened a few months ago. I was contracted for a spokesperson job with Proctor & Gamble in Orlando. The event was the American Academy of Dermatologists

Convention. More than 30,000 dermatologists from all over the world. Not only did I have the blessing of praying with two of my co-presenters, but I was also asked by a Proctor & Gamble Executive to pray with them for a family member who had walked away from God and was heading down a dark and dangerous path. So there, on the show floor during the convention; with hundreds of people walking all around us we prayed. A day later, this same individual approached Heather and I in the lobby of the Rosen Center as we were preparing to head to the airport. They were accompanied by another P&G senior executive. Both of them asked if we could all pray together. And so, we did. In a crowded hotel lobby.

This is what God does when our hearts are willing. He will present us with opportunities to 'work' for Him, to give Him our best, to Glorify Him in 'word and deed'.

We should not be intimidated by this responsibility. Actually, we should be encouraged by it, and celebrate the fact that God rejoices in the work we do in His name. It is part of our Christian life, and it is good, it is a really really good life.

With that being said, we turn to our third and final principle.

Slide Five

Principle Three

Live each day with the knowledge that 'this life is not as good as it gets.

It is hard to imagine this life being 'as good as it gets. When you think about it, that idea is pretty absurd. This life, as good as it gets? With sincere apologies to the hit movie starring Jack Nicholson Helen Hunt and Greg Kinnear. I actually thought that the dog gave the best performance, but that is just my opinion. Great movie, terrible example of how to live a Christian life in Christ.

There are those dangerous charlatans, those false preachers who falsely and foolishly claim that "You can live your best life now".

NO, not if you are a Christ following believer.

We learned today that this earth is not our home. There is something so much better in store for all of us who have received Christ into our hearts.

Slide Six

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be* compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

In Romans 8:18 the Apostle reminds us that: (recite passage)

The tough times, heartaches, disappointments and setbacks we endure in this temporal world can in now way be compared to what God has in store for us as Christ following believers. . And the 'Glory' to be revealed to us is the indescribable majesty of God the Father, and the awesome reality of living in His presence for all of eternity. Living apart from God's Glory means that we will have nothing. Only the agony of everlasting darkness and total separation from Jesus.

This is what Paul was telling the early church. This is what God's Word is telling all of us this morning.

Invitation to Discipleship.

It really is that simple. I am not claiming that the Christian life is easy; there are three preachers here this morning who will testify that it certainly is anything but easy. However, the choice is simple. We have to be willing to say yes to Jesus. It means that we turn our backs to the world and our hearts and minds to God. We have to humbly admit that we are broken sinners in desperate need of a loving savior. We have to believe that God is everything He says He is. Jesus tells us that "I am

the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me." Jesus is the only way to salvation, the only way to our heavenly inheritance, the only possibility of experiencing a glorified transformation.

Please hear me; it is not my intention to step on anyone's 'theological toes', but sometimes loved ones, you have to 'move your feet, and point your toes' toward Jesus the Christ.

He is waiting, with welcome arms to receive you.

Slide Seven

Give God Your Very Best; Know that God's Very Best is Yet To Come

He loves you, and He desires for you to love Him back, and to 'give Him your very best, and for you to truly know that His very best is yet to come'.

Let's pray.

Father God, thank you for your Word. Thank you for loving us. Thank you for the redemptive work of your son Jesus.

We pray that the spark ignited this morning will turn into a flame. That our hearts will burn for you.

Help us, LORD, to give you our best every day. Grant us the strength, discipline and obedience to Glorify you in all that we do, in word and deed.

Please continue to place a fiery hedge of protection around us, and around those whom we love.

We pray this with expectancy knowing it is already done, in the precious, priceless and perfect name of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

Amen.