

## **“Bucket List” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Ash Wednesday – February 22, 2023**

- I. **2 Corinthians 6:2** - <sup>2</sup> For He says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.
- II. **Do you have a bucket list?**
  - a. I’m sure all of us have some things we want to do before we “kick the bucket” or die.
  - b. BMW did a survey of 1000 people, asking them what they have on their bucket list... or a list of things they want to do before they die.
    - i. It seems that most of us want to do something daring...
      1. 34% wanted to drive a racecar
      2. 29% wanted to ride a motorcycle
      3. 28% wanted to skydive
      4. 23% wanted to run a marathon
      5. 18% wanted to bungee jump <sup>1</sup>
  - c. Some of you know that I bungee jumped a few years ago – much to the chagrin of those who thought I was testing the Lord...
    - i. It was a “bucket list” thing for me – along with skydiving... so I guess I’m not a lot different than the others out there.
  - d. How about you?
    - i. Would you like to go to Europe, the Holy Land, or some other travel destination around the world?
    - ii. Would you like to do something risky like parasailing, hunting big game animals, or bull riding?
      1. None of these things appeal to me, but then again, it’s your bucket list, not mine!
  - e. Bucket lists are not a new thing, as history tells us of ancient Greeks who wanted to accomplish certain goals before they died.
    - i. Fifteen years ago, a movie came out called, “The Bucket List” with Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson – as they were diagnosed with terminal diseases and tried to find some meaning in life before they died.
  - f. I wonder if the writer of our Epistle lesson today, St. Paul, had a bucket list.
    - i. He had certainly traveled the world.
      1. I read somewhere that he traveled almost 7000 miles in all his various journeys – and to think that was before modern transportation!
    - ii. He spent time in prison – although I’m not sure that would be on anyone’s wish list – along with a laundry list of terrible experiences that he writes about in our lesson.
    - iii. He started many churches and was a faithful follower of Jesus.

- iv. At the end of his life, he was in custody in Rome – and we don't know for sure, but tradition says he was executed there.
- v. As he looked back on the many things he had done, I wonder if he had any regrets.
  - 1. Regrets about not making it to certain parts of the world to share the Gospel.
  - 2. Regrets that he decided to go to Jerusalem against the desires of his friends (Acts 21:11-14)
  - 3. Regrets that he didn't do enough for God.

### III. **Today is a day of reflection.**

- a. Ash Wednesday puts us in the uncomfortable position of reflecting on our mortality... on our own death.
- b. Why? Because of sin, that's why.
- c. Sin is the reason we die – and from the moment we are born, the countdown to our death begins.
- d. Sometimes we have a close call – a diagnosis of cancer, a car accident, an emergency surgery – and we are brought face to face with death.
  - i. Other times, we see others struggling to survive through their own crisis and we see how death is always close at hand.
- e. When you stop for a moment and consider your own life... and death... what's left to accomplish? What do you hope to do in this world before life has ended here?
- f. It seems that a bucket list is not usually about loving God or loving others.
  - i. No doubt, we all get caught up in wanting to do things before we die, but why is our list full of selfish desires that will probably do nothing for anyone?
  - ii. I can personally say that bungee jumping is a huge thrill – but it was a personal experience that I can't really say it did anything to grow my faith, or to help others.
- g. As we reflect upon our lives and the things we would like to do with the time we have left, it makes sense to put God in that equation.

### IV. **St. Paul calls us to stop and reflect upon the time.**

- a. He clarifies that all believers are connected to Jesus as His ambassadors, and that the sacrifice Christ made on the cross... took our sins away.
- b. I used this wonderful verse last week in my sermon, "For our sake He [the Father] made Him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." (vs 21)
  - i. Nothing could be better news for people who are staring death in the face – because at any moment we could be that person who suddenly passes on... and then what will your bucket list do for you?
- c. No, Paul says, be reconciled to God.... the favorable time is now! (vs 20, 2)

- i. There is no better time than the present to come before the Lord in repentance and seek His forgiveness for the things which separate.
    - ii. The selfishness, the lack of love toward our neighbor, the worldly cares over the things God cares about.
    - iii. In all these things we run back to Jesus – we come back home to the only thing that really matters – our relationship to a loving and wonderful God and Redeemer.
  - d. Lent is all about recognizing the favorable time is now.
    - i. The favorable time is now live our lives in the world as Christ's ambassadors.
    - ii. The favorable time is now to consider our relationship with God.
    - iii. The favorable time is now to repent.
- V. **Whatever your plans for the future**, Jesus wants you in paradise.
  - a. It's not a bad thing to want to live your life to the fullest – experience the blessings of creation – but the most important thing is Christ in you.
  - b. Perhaps you might add one more thing to your bucket list – heaven.
    - i. The best part about heaven on your bucket list is you don't have to do anything – except believe.
    - ii. Believe that Jesus really did come to this world... that He really resisted all sin... that He died for you... and that He rose again in glory.
    - iii. With this faith, your bucket list will be complete, as sin and death no longer hold you – because you will be in the arms of Jesus. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Michelle Healy and Sam Ward, "USA Today Snapshots: Activities We'd Put on Our Bucket List" USAToday.com