

Rev. Dan Welch Epiphany 3 1-24-21 Text- 1 Corinthians 7: 29-31

Silos. They come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. And in the countryside in this part of the state they are everywhere. As you probably know, silos, specifically tower silos like the ones on the cover of today's bulletins, are designed to hold one thing at a time. Each harvested crop is kept separate from the others without mixing them together.

3. The reason I mention this is because I believe the way we live our lives today in America looks a lot like silos. I'll show you what I mean. On the screen are pictures of cans of vegetables with the labels taken off, and on top of them there is a word (*or picture*) to represent different areas of life. They'll each be a silo. **(Show visual of a can with dollar signs on top.)** Here is a close-up of one. The Dollar signs on this "silo" represent how we spend our money.

Here is the whole group of silos: **(Show visual of six cans with signs on top).**

Going from left to right; the first silo is for work. The next one is for church. The one symbolized with a house stand for our family life. The fourth silo, the one with the dollar signs, stands for shopping and the stuff we have in life. The one with the American Flag stands for our role as citizens as we live in this country. The last one, the one with a person splashing in the water represents "Fun", for the rest and recreation times in life.

Notice how they're all lined up but *separate* from one another. The people at work may not be the people we meet at church. What we do at home is different from when we're at school or out in the community. How we use our money when out shopping could be different from when the collection plate goes by. What we consider fun may not line up with how we feel about work. Do you see how this works? We live in silos.

The problem with silo living is that it too often leaves Jesus out of so many areas of life. We can go to work and Jesus recedes into the background. We pull out our credit card at a store and forget about how Jesus wants us to save or be generous for those in need. We can get so caught up in our fun activities that worshiping Jesus is left at home while on vacation or how we're acting at a ballgame. Family time or when we're at home becomes so filled with errands, cleaning, television, and "me time" that time for devotions gets squeezed out. From what I read on social media; politics doesn't seem to reflect the Christian faith very much. So, what ends up happening is that Jesus is relegated to the church silo, and that means he's not guiding the other areas of life. That's not good. It's never good to leave Jesus out of any area of our lives.

2. The apostle Paul knew that: “The appointed time has grown very short,” he says. “From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away” (vv 29–31). In this short passage from 1 Corinthians, Paul is calling us to **live every day with Jesus and for Him, no matter what part of life that might be.**

Why? Because the time we have left is “short.”

Now, Paul isn't so much trying to predict when Jesus will come back on Judgment Day here. He may have believed that Jesus' return to bring an end to this world would come soon, but he's not focusing on when that will happen. Rather, he's emphasizing that the time we have left before Jesus ends time as we know it is a critical time. It's an opportune time. It's a time to live a certain way. He's calling for an urgency to live for Jesus in the days that are left for this world or in the time we have left in our personal lives.

Oh, one day Jesus will return. What a glorious day that will be! Tears will evaporate because sickness will be gone. No more Covid. No more cancers or heart attacks. Evil will be consigned to hell forever. No more shootings. No more injustice. No more violence. No more war. No more bullying. Instead, the dead in Jesus will rise from the grave. A new creation will arise out of the ashes of this world. Our bodies will be whole and healthy. We'll fill our lungs with the cleanest of air to sing praises that lift our hearts to new heights. Our eyes will see clearly the beauty of God's creation in all the rainbow of colors. A joy wells up inside us as we're reunited with those we lost to death and hugs abound once again. And all creation will live in harmony as even the lamb will lie down with the lion in perfect peace and safety. We're looking forward to that day. Come, Lord Jesus!

And we live in that hope, that anticipation, because Jesus has already risen from the dead. On the cross, He took upon Himself our sin and diseases, our tears and violence, our death and hell. He took all the evil and buried it in a tomb. Then on Easter morning, He burst forth in glory and life. He gives us a glimpse of what's to come with His body whole and glorified. He has paved the way for our eternity, and in His victory this world will one day pass away. A new creation awaits us. Our Lord and Savior will welcome us to His home forever. He brings joy to us and all His followers.

But we don't know when that will be any more than Paul did. So we wait, and as we wait, we live in an opportune time. The days we have are critical for

living with Jesus and for Jesus in every area of our lives. How do we live that way?

Listen to Paul: Live as though you were not married. What?! No, Paul is not calling for us to disband our families. Later in this chapter, he says we don't sin if we do get married or if we do not. But we're not to live as if our family is all important. As wonderful of a blessing from God family is, nothing in this physical world lasts forever, not even our dear family members. Unless Jesus returns first, we will all one day die. So what Paul is saying here is that there's something even more than family. Our life with Christ endures forever and calls for living for Him now. We simply cannot leave Jesus out of homes.

Live as if you are not rejoicing or mourning. What?! No, Paul is not calling for us to live emotionally detached from life like robots. Yes, we will rejoice at a birthday party, at a Christmas Eve dinner, on vacation swimming in the ocean, or just enjoying a meal at a restaurant. And we will mourn. Tears will stream down your cheeks when you stand before the casket to say good-bye to someone. But our emotions will change or fade as time passes. We don't live just for the joys in life nor are we destroyed by the sadness. No, there's more than those times. Our life with Christ endures forever and calls for living for Him now. We give our emotions to Him in every circumstance of life.

Paul says to buy as though we had nothing. What?! No, Paul is not calling for us to give everything away. We will go to the grocery store and buy food for the week. We will pay taxes and our bills. We will go shopping for clothes. But all this stuff will one day be gone. We brought nothing into this world and will take nothing out of it. Paul is saying that there's much more to life than what we buy and call our own. Our life with Christ endures forever and calls for living for Him now. We simply cannot leave Jesus out of what we buy, keep, and give away.

Yes, Paul says this world will pass away. But before that happens, he calls for us to live in this opportune time, this critical time, with Jesus in every area of our lives.

1. So instead of living in silos, we are to live as if life were a wheel. Let me show you what I mean. **(Show final slide- the wheel)** At the hub of the wheel is Jesus. The cross is empty. Our resurrected Lord is present here and now in our lives. He has guaranteed the life to come. Everything revolves around Jesus. He is the center of life.

Now look beyond the wheel itself. The words are "Our Resurrection," "New Creation," "Jesus Returns," and "Glorious Final Day." Our hope, our future, is there, waiting for us. And it's glorious.

The spokes are the various areas of life we live each day. Work is connected to Jesus and looks forward to his return. In the meantime, we work with Jesus right next to us. Honesty, integrity, and effort go into what we're doing, and not just for a paycheck. Our work is a way for us to live for Jesus.

Our money and stuff are not our own. It's all a gift from Jesus. What's in this wallet is not mine to do with however I please. No, my decisions here come from my relationship with Jesus too. Some will go for bills, going out to eat and for our vacation. But those offering envelopes that are labeled First Evangelical Lutheran are faithfully filled as well. So also are donations for those in need. One of the most important lines on your tax return is not how much you made or your refund or what you owe. No, it's the amount of charitable contributions you've given away because Jesus is at the center of your money life too.

The Bible tells us to respect our governing authorities. We are to pray for them no matter who they are.

We are to rest and relax in life. A day off is good. A vacation can recharge the batteries. Yet the decisions we make to enjoy ourselves still involve Jesus. Where will we go? How will I act? How much will I spend? What role will alcohol play? Where will we worship?

Do you see how it works? Live life as a wheel, with Jesus as the hub, eternity as your hope, and every spoke lived with Jesus and for Him.

Jesus could come back tomorrow or a hundred years from now. I could live fifty more years or life could be gone in an instant. But the amount of time left is not the key question. The question is how. How do we live when life is short? Not as silos but as a wheel. The hub is Jesus risen from the dead and the end is glorious. And the time now is critical, an opportune time for living **with** Jesus and **for** Him. Not silos but a wheel. Amen.

