

Growing up I had a friend. He was a good friend ... a nice guy ... a good drummer ... and a pretty good mechanic. But, he wasn't what we might say the brightest bulb on the block. One day, for some reason, we were looking at the obituary page and someone noted that it was interesting that all those people died in alphabetical order. His response was that he never thought of that. As I said, not the brightest bulb on the block.

You might think that I am making that up, but it is a true story. What is important is the fact that there is an obituary, that lists the people who have passed away in the previous few days. We also realize that the obituary does not list all the people who have passed on any given time. But, when we see the obituaries we should be reminded of the temporality of life itself.

When I first came into the REC, Lilah and I lived with a 95 year old woman. She used to joke that she would get up in the morning, read the obits, and if her name wasn't in them, she would get out of bed. Again, another reminder, that someday we are all going to pass from this life to the next.

As you know, there is an emphasis here at St. Timothy's – as there should be in all churches – of telling people about Jesus Christ. You can call it whatever you will – evangelism, witnessing, spreading the gospel – it doesn't matter. What is important is that we should be telling others in our circle of family and friends about Jesus Christ – that he came to die for the sins of those who believe in him. If we don't tell them, then who will?

In the whole scheme of things we need to realize that our lives here on earth are temporary. Once it begins, we don't know when it will end. But, if there is one sure thing in life, other than taxes – it is that our lives here on earth will end.

However, we know, as the Scriptures teach, that we are eternal creatures. Once created, our souls or spirits will live forever. For the Christian, we know that we will be in the presence of our God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that for the non-Christian eternity will be spent in a place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth and where the worm does not die – in other words, hell. Here again, we see the necessity of telling others about Jesus Christ.

Our Psalm from this morning reminds us of the fact that life is short. Please turn with me to Psalm 39. This is a Psalm of lament. Something was going on in the life of David – we are not told what it was – but this Psalm reflects his innermost feelings. It also seems that David was older when he wrote this and he was looking back at his earthly life.

Notice first of all that what was troubling him was so strong that it caused him to be silent – to not say anything – Psalm 39:1-3 (READ). As we see, the response to his feelings were so intense that he could not speak – but then, as we read at the end of verse three, he finally did – *“Then I spoke with my tongue”*

What he says speaks volumes about our lives here on this earth – and how temporary it is. Again, look what he says – Psalm 39:4-6 (READ). As he begins to speak, he cries out to the Lord in his distress – 39:4: “*Lord, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am.*” His life, while successful in human terms had been filled with sorrow and trouble.

There was the incident with Bathsheba, and the death of Uriah and then as a result, the death of their first-born child. And then following this, that as a consequence of his sin, the kingdom would be taken away from his family. There also was the fact that his own son Absalom rebelled against him and tried to kill him. These, among other things were probably troubling David as he neared the end of his life – and he wanted to know when it was all going to end.

In the midst of this he realizes and expresses that he is really nothing – notice what he says: *That I may know how frail I am*. But he doesn’t stop here as he continues to pour out his heart before God – Psalms 39:5: “*Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor.*”

Basically he is saying that in the whole scheme of things – in the ages of eternity my life is really nothing. It is as long as a span of the hand – a handbreadth. His age – however long he lives is counted as nothing in the ages of eternity – and even at his best, man’s life is but a vapor. It is here today and in many cases, gone today, or at best, tomorrow.

As he continues, note what he says: 39:6: “*Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, And does not know who will gather them.*”

Again, he is commenting on the shortness and temporariness of human life – man, even a man after God’s own heart, like David, is but a shadow that will soon disappear. And even though one is very busy in this earthly life ... even though might gather many riches in an earthly sense ... it is, at it’s best a temporary delight. Because in the end he *does not know who will gather them*, as he says.

I am reminded of the rich man, recorded for us in Luke 12. In the teaching by our Savior, he was asked a question about how one should divide an inheritance. Listen to what our Savior says: Luke 12:13- 21: “*Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be*

*merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

So we see where we should be gathering our riches – and that is to God – but again, we see the temporary nature of life itself. We should strive to lay up our treasures in heaven that awaits us.

Now, if that is all there is to life – it would seem pretty bleak and worthless. But, as David goes on he tells us where his hope and trust is at – 39:7: “*And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.*” Even as he recognizes that temporary nature of things ... even in his distress and sorry – he still has complete trust and hope in his God. We must note here that when the Bible talks about hope, it is a sure thing. It is not “I hope something good happens” – but that absolute assurance of a future in the presence of God and his Savior.

In spite of his earthly situation David’s hope and confidence was in God and God alone. He recognized that what was happening in this world was not the end of all things. He turns to God for comfort in all of his distress because he knows that he is a child of God – and importantly, that God is working out His perfect will in his life, as He is in ours. As such, David again cries out to God in his distress for deliverance – Psalm 39:8-13 (READ). Notice clearly that he recognizes that God is in control and that again, his life is but a vapor. He is but a sojourner on this earth – as his father’s were, and implied, as all who would follow him.

So, what do we see in all of this? Well, despite that shortness of life itself ... despite the distress, sorry and trouble that we might have – there is something more.

As we have noted on numerous occasions we have received a multitude of blessings as a result of our salvation. We have forgiveness of our sins ... we have the privilege of prayer ... we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts ... and most importantly we have a place reserved in heaven for us.

Again, last week I quoted from 1 Peter 1:3,4, words that we studied last year: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you...*” reserved in heaven for you... reserved in heaven for you and me — what a glorious thought. We are just passing through this world on our way to heaven.

In all of this we see two very important things. First, that despite the trouble and difficulties in our lives, something better awaits us. We know what the future holds. Even though we are but vapor and a shadow we know what our end will be – and it is actually not an end, but the beginning of our lives in the presence of God and our Savior.

And secondly, in all of this we see the importance of telling others about Jesus Christ. Life is short for all of us and we should desire that all would have the same futures that we have. The only way that they can have that is through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

So, think of those in your family and friends who do not know Christ and pray for the opportunity to tell them about Jesus. Again, remember, we are not responsible for their salvation, but we have the responsibility and privilege of telling them about Jesus Christ.