

Eternally Thinking, Eternally Living

“Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).

There is a line in the movie “The Quiet Man,” which starred John Wayne and Maureen O’Hara, in which O’Hara, playing John Wayne’s wife, said, “I must have my things about me!” It seems many today have the same philosophy about life. We easily get caught up in having our things about us, but forget life isn’t about the things we accumulate. It’s interesting, as we go through life, the things we must have about us change frequently. We accumulate all sorts of stuff, but we are never satisfied with what we have, being attracted to whatever is the latest and the greatest. We have to go here, see this, do that, but the gratification from it all is short lived, and we want to move on to other experiences. In the process of indulging desires, we may miss out on what life is all about.

Things may loom large in importance to us, until someone close to us has to deal with an accident, a serious illness or something else that threatens his or her time on earth, or that someone else becomes oneself. When faced with one’s own mortality, or that of a loved one, *things* no longer seem that intriguing. We are reminded at such times that what really matters are those we love and care for, relationships with each other, time spent together while there is still time. Most of all, our relationship with God and where we will spend eternity becomes most important.

James reminds us we are not masters of our own destinies. We can make all kinds of grandiose plans, but we don’t really know what can happen from one minute to the next. If you consider the sum total of the days of our lives, compared to how long we will spend in eternity, we are a vapor, a puff of smoke that is briefly visible and then dissipates and is gone. The things of life we had about us will be taken up by others, sold or even discarded, but we will go into eternity. Solomon said, “As he came from his mother’s womb, so he will go again, naked as he came; he will take nothing for his efforts that he can carry in his hands” (Ecclesiastes 5:15). What each one of us takes is what we have carried in our hearts, which comes from within and makes us what we are – how we think, feel and act. How that has motivated us to live our lives will be what we answer for in judgment. Jesus reminds us, “For from within, out of people’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, promiscuity, stinginess, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a person” (Mark 7:21-23).

We have no clue when the vapor of our lives will vanish, but we do know what will happen afterwards. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). Will our lives have been filled with things or relationships? Will we have pursued stuff or righteousness? Will our memories be of things that no longer exist or of spiritual realities that commend us to heaven? The longer we live, the more yesterdays we accumulate, and the fewer tomorrows we have. With the time you have, how do you live? What do you live for?

We can’t go back and undo our mistakes, but we can decide to make a difference starting today, for whom we live and what we do with life. Appreciate what you have, whether little or much and what God provides for your physical well-being. Love the people in your life, for you don’t know how long you have them to love. Remember that Jesus is Lord, and let God be God. Live for the eternal. When the smoke of life clears in the here and now, have you lived so that there is something better waiting for you, an existence that will never fade away in eternity. “Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4). Live for what lasts longer than a vapor or a puff of smoke. Live eternally thinking.

By: Robert Johnson