A Life Well Lived

Text: Colossians 3:17

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**Scriptures:** Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Colossians 3:12-17

Songs Chosen: [SttL] 216, 62, 214, 201, 134

Series: Occasional

Theme: The new self in Christ continuously lives out the new identity through every word and deed

Proposition: Choose to live for Christ in all that you do!

**Introduction**

Would you like to have this epitaph inscribed on your gravestone: “He/she lived life well?”.I would!

Socrates famously said that the unconsidered life is not worth living. He meant that a life lived without forethought or principle is of little value to the person living it. There is some truth in what he said, so what principle is the best one for a life well lived? Some, perhaps more outwardly moral people say, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". This is known as the ‘Golden Rule’. Others follow Solomon who tried every kind of pleasure, amassed every type of possession, and buried himself in his work. However, he came to the conclusion that it was all emptiness; vanity, a chasing after the wind.

Many follow the folly of Solomon in trying to live life well, only finally to find near the end, or at the end, that nothing has really satisfied them. They remain empty and unfulfilled. Chasing after the wind is **not** the way to live life well. You can never catch the wind and hold onto it. It will always elude your grasp. Too many people when dying have looked back and said with great sadness “I’ve wasted my life”. Do you want to live your life without regrets? What do you desire to hear from the Lord when your life here ends, and you go to glory? '*Well done, good and faithful servant… Enter into the joy of your master*' (Matt 25:21)?

Our text this morning gives us the answer to the question ‘How can I live my life well?’ Here is a more excellent way to live life well which is captured in one verse from the Bible: **Colossians 3:17** *And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

We’re going to explore the truth of these words under three headings this morning:

1. Do everything for Christ
2. Do everything thankfully
3. Do everything through Christ
4. **Do Everything for Christ**

INDNJC is written at the end of many of the musical manuscripts of composer Johann Sebastian Bach. If inscribed today they might look like an Internet password, but they clearly were not! They are the initials for the Latin words: “*In Nomini Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*”. “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ “. A musical genius, Bach understood the source of all human gifting. Whatever he created for others to hear was done in the name of Jesus Christ.

Each day you and I compose a ‘living symphony’ with our thoughts, words and actions, line by line, page by page, until one day the ‘score’ is complete. A life well lived is a life in which everything is done for Christ, in the words of our text: ‘*And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus’.* This life principle is precious treasure for all those who are new creations in Christ. Those whose life is hidden with Christ in God. This is very practical instruction on how to live life well. v17 condenses all the truth of chapter 3 and the first part of 4 into a single glorious, rich pearl of wisdom from the Only Wise God.

* Here is the way to put aside anger, wrath, malice slander, abusive speech.
* Here is the way to put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiving one another.
* Here is the way to love and to be at peace.

This is the way to “*walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God*”: Colossians 3:17 *“And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus”.* “In Nomini Domini Nostri Jesu Christi”, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

This means willingly submitting to His authority in everything; without exception. This means to voluntarily ‘bend the knee’ in all areas of life; without exception. Christ is Lord of Creation. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. Brothers and Sisters, we are new creations in him. We are not new creations in Christ merely on a Sunday, but somehow remain unchanged for the other six days of the week. We do not change who we are in Christ when we leave here through the doors of the church building and enter the carpark. We are not be “saints in the church and devils in the world”. We are not merely to put on the new self, made alive in Christ for ‘religious activities’, worship services, Bible studies, etc, but we are to live as that new self all the time 24/7.

Whatever you do in word or deed covers any and every situation, circumstance and stage of life. To do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is to walk in continuous submission to Him all the time, because you love Him. To use the light of His Word as a lamp for your feet as you live. Because this wisdom covers all of life, there are as many examples which could be given as there are stars in the heavens, here a few:

* Work Life– labour to the very best of your ability returning a faithful effort to your boss. Centuries after they were built, modern-day repairers of the stonework high on the outside walls of European cathedrals discovered that stone carvings were crafted in places which could not be seen from below. The workmen had in mind the Lord for whom they cut the stone. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men.
* Eat and drinking – healthy, moderation, remembering that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. “*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Cor 10:31).
* School – learning, diligence, serving others.
* Home – maintaining good relationships within marriage and family.
* Sex – only in marriage, husbands and wives willingly fulfilling conjugal duties to one another (1 Cor 7:3). no pornography, no adultery.
* Living our lives openly before neighbours, workmates "*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven*” (Matt 5:16).

If you desire to live life well, choose in everything, both in what you say and in what you do, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Secondly, do everything with thanks.

1. **Do Everything Thankfully**

Paul and Timothy begin this letter with thanks, desiring that the church at Colossae also would be able to joyously give thanks to the Father (Col 1:12). The importance of living thankfully is there in our text also: “*And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,* ***giving thanks*** *to God the Father through Him.”* Giving thanks is expressed here as a continuous action. Here is the meaning ‘as you do everything; be thankful”.

Expressing gratitude is much easier when we experience what we receive as pleasant, comfortable and enjoyable. It is much more challenging when things seem to go against us. Job thanked God even when everything turned “pear-shaped” and he suffered great losses. *He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD*. (Job 1:21)" A thankful heart in every circumstance realises that God only ever does us good however much pain, distress, trouble and loss we experience.

The psalmist was thankful for the opportunity to be taught vital lessons through the refining crucible of suffering: “*It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes*” (Ps 119:71). Remember Paul and Silas when they were beaten with rods, fastened in stocks. In the jail in Philippi they were praying and singing praises to God. They were thankful, even though they had been unjustly imprisoned.

None of us here now are guests of the New Zealand corrections department! But some, perhaps many, feel trapped by our circumstances. It could be the immobility which comes with age, deep sadness of mind and soul, physical injury, disability, a difficult marriage, abusive parents, troubles at school or home. Brothers and Sisters, in any and all of these circumstances there is every good reason to continuously give thanks to God. Because God has purchased us for Himself with the blood sacrifice of His beloved Son. We have been bought with a price. (1 Cor 6:20). We belong to the Lord Jesus. We are bonded servants of our Master.

Does this mean that we are like African slaves in the 18th century bound in chains for life of misery in new world? Or like helpless children trafficked and forced to work long hours in factories, conscripted as soldiers, beggars or for the sex-trade? No, most certainly not! Our slavery is true freedom because our Lord is gentle and humble in heart. He has been our ‘servant’ on the cross before He calls us to serve Him willingly because we belong to Him. He has purchased us with His blood, paying the ransom to set us free. In doing everything in His name with thanks to God, we find ongoing rest for our souls with true contentment and peace.

It is not the sword of Christ which forces our submission to Him as Lord, but “*The love of Christ controls us*” (2 Cor 5:14). He hems us in, encloses us, enfolds us, not in harsh rules, regulations, burdens, but with his perfect love. “*It was for freedom that Christ set us free*” (Galatians 5:1). We are to be ‘confined’ by His grace, not by His legal command. Christ makes this clear when He teaches His disciples: Not: **“***If you fear me, you will do what* *I order*” BUT"*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*” (John 14:15).

The Key to Living Life Well is NOT to feel pressured by duty, but to be propelled, compelled, by the best of desires. The Apostle John puts it this way: “*There is no fear in love*”. (1 John 4.18). The root of gratitude of thanksgiving to God, is love for Him. Colossians 3:17 *And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father.* This is how to live life well. How can we do this? Only through Christ. Which brings us to our 3rd point:

1. **Do Everything through Christ**

Does a good mother feed her baby because she is duty-bound or because she fears prosecution by police if the baby starves? Of course not! She feeds her baby because she loves her child. Her motivation is deep affection and attachment. This is the motivation of those who know Christ and deeply desire to live life well as His new creations. Non-Christians sometimes say the Bible is just a stuffy old book of rules and regulations with a killjoy god who makes life miserable. Perhaps some of us think that way sometimes!

We know that *“by grace we have been saved through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8).* We can teach salvation by grace, but live like we believe our merit with God is earned by our own effort, clocking up religious brownie points. That was one of the dangers facing the young church at Colossae. Some were teaching salvation through attending religious festivals. There were extra-Biblical rules “*Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch*” (2:21).

Similarly, at the time of the prophet Isaiah there was external worship without an internal love for the Lord. The Lord speaks through his prophet “*This people draw near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men*”. (Isa 29:13). The religious leaders in 1st century Israel taught a brutal legalism which enslaved people. Jesus said to them. "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness*” (Matt 23:23). The result of doing everything (including saying and singing words of thanks) only out of a sense of duty and obligation is misery. This is the recipe for a life not lived well. A life full of despair and defeat and regrets. It is the tyranny of legalism.

In contrast, some, in seeking to live life well have abandoned the law of God entirely and “moved the goalposts” so that their own efforts put “runs on the board” in their own system of merit. This was also in danger of happening in Colossae: some relied on their own self-made religion. This is an ever-present danger which the Lord warns us against with two words “through Him” at the end of sentence in the original Greek language. These words make all the difference for us because, brothers and sisters, we do not live life well in all that we do and say. Do we?

We must do everything through the grace which comes through Christ; if we are to do anything at all in His name. Our own strength and ability by themselves simply will not do. All our works in Jesus name are only possible through Him, through His perfect strength and ability. He is like a grapevine producing fruit though us, His connected branches. The Lord explains (John 15:5) "*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing”*. In order to do anything in the name of Lord Jesus, anything worth doing, anything of lasting value, anything which gives glory to Him we need His strength all the time, in everything daily. This truth is beautifully expressed in the words of the hymn “I need Thee every hour”; “in joy or pain; come quickly and abide, or life is vain”. As Solomon found, life without God to be like empty wind: a life not well lived.

Brothers and Sisters, we can live well by thanking God that it is t**hrough Jesus** we live, move and have our being. We can live well by thanking God that **through Jesus** we can face the giants in life: job loss, cancer, depression, hatred from others, lies, malice. We can live well by thanking God that **through the fullness of Christ** we have received grace upon grace. We can do all things **through Him** who strengthens us. We can do all things with grace.

We can also die well by thanking God that through Jesus the sting of death has been taken away. The psalmist wisely petitions God in Psalm 90 (12): “*So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom”.* What will be inscribed on your gravestone when you die? “He/she lived life well”?

Are you making the most of your life? Are or are you squandering our time? Don’t waste these precious days! – not one of them! “*Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:15-16).* The reputation of Christ is at stake with every action we take, every word we speak if we are to do all in His name, we need His grace daily, hourly, momentarily as we write the symphonies of our lives.

Enjoy life in Christ! Enjoy God through His Son. Be satisfied in Christ. Be content in Christ today. Live in the land of blessing now as foretaste of the fuller blessing to come! That was what God said to his people as they travelled through the desert of Sinai. *“Choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days”(Deuteronomy 30:19b-20).*

Chose to live for Christ in all that you do for He is your life and your length of days! The ability to live this way is a gracious gift of God, please don’t leave it unwrapped. Live well for Christ. Be thankful. Do everything through Him.

AMEN.