**A Jesus Epiphay - *Is This All There Is?***

Isaiah 6:1-8; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; Luke 5:1-11; Psalm 103:13-22 2.10.19

**Summary: Peter, James and John catch the biggest haul of fish they'd ever known... and then they just left their nets and boat to follow Jesus. Why would they do that?**

Intro: Albert Einstein was taking a train to an out of town engagement. The conductor stopped by to punch his ticket, but the scientist – preoccupied with his work, explained that he couldn't find his ticket. He couldn’t find it in his coat pockets, in his briefcase, anywhere!!

The conductor finally said, “We all know who you are, Dr. Einstein. I'm sure you bought ticket. Don't worry about it.”

As the conductor moved along, he looked back to see Einstein on his hands and knees he was searching under the seats for his ticket.

The conductor walked back, "Dr. Einstein, please, don't worry about it. I know who you are."

Exasperated, Einstein looked up and said, “I, know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going.”

Our question for this morning is this: Do you know WHERE you are going? Do you have a goal in life?

Now most people have a goal of some kind in their lives. When they’re kids – the goal is to grow up, just have a good time, get through school, get a car, and maybe even go to college

When they become adults – the goal is to get a job, get married, get a house, have kids, save for retirement. And when they get old the goal is to have enough to retire, see their grandkids, maybe travel and perhaps plan for their funeral.

But a lot of people do all that – they make all those kinds of plans for their lives - and then end up asking themselves: “IS THIS ALL THERE IS? Is this all there is to live for?”

Many are the testimonies from celebrities and sports figures and people of prominence - people you’d THINK had it all - but deep inside they have an emptiness. And a common question they all seem to ask is: “IS THIS ALL THERE IS?”

As I was reading our text for this morning, I began to wonder if that wasn’t what was happening with Peter, James and John.

Luke tells us that *“the people were crowding around Him(Jesus) and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then He sat down and taught the people from the boat.”* Luke 5:1-3

For days now, Jesus has been teaching and preaching and doing miracles and healing the sick. But up until now He doesn’t have any close followers. No REAL disciples. But that’s going to change real quick. Jesus says to Simon *“Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”*

And Simon answered,  *“Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.” When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”.”* Luke 5:5-8

Now Jesus had done other miracles around Nazareth. But not like this one… this miracle was personal. This miracle was JUST for Peter and for his cousins James and John.

The question is this: Why THIS miracle… and why THESE men?

It helps to know what kind of men Peter, James and John were. They were not really impressive men. They’re common fishermen doing a common job. And they did the same job over and over and over, day, after day, after day. And I don’t think they’re satisfied with their lives. I’m sure they had got goals in life: They wanted to be successful enough to be able to pay the bills, feed the family and have a relatively “comfortable” life. But I suspect they had a dream. I suspect they dreamed of getting that ONE BIG catch. I can visualize them talking about “scoring it big” in the fishing industry and that would somehow change their lives. In fact, I suspect they may have even talked about that very idea that very morning.

And then along came Jesus. And Jesus gave them the desires of their heart. They catch more fish than they’ve ever caught before in their entire lives. And what do they do?

They drop everything – leave their nets and boats and begin following Jesus. Why would they do that? Why would they simply drop everything to follow Jesus?

I believe it was because they had finally gotten that one big catch they’d dreamed of ... and it failed to satisfy them like they thought it would. And at this point in their lives I think they finally faced that NAGGING question: “IS THIS ALL THERE IS? Is this all there is to live for?”

William Barclay (theologian) once wrote: “There are two great days in a person's life: the day we are born and the day we discover why.”

Ecclesiastes: tells us that God has “… *set eternity into the hearts of men.*” (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

In other words, God has placed in our hearts the belief that we were made for more than this. We were made for bigger things! It’s because God has set eternity in our hearts that people often look at their lives and ask: IS THIS ALL THERE IS? Because deep inside their hearts they know - this ISN’T all there is!!!

Jesus was constantly challenging people to look beyond this life. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said: *“…seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*…” Matthew 6:33 Seek this first!!!!

In fact seeking God’s Kingdom is so critical that Jesus told this set of parables about it: *“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and SELLS ALL THAT HE HAS and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and SOLD ALL THAT HE HAD and bought it.”* Matthew 13:44-45

Jesus is essentially saying: If you have to - sell everything you’ve got to get this!!! It’s that important!!!! Of course, the question is why? Why is this so important?

Well, first, - if you’re willing to make God’s kingdom that important in your life that you’re willing to sell everything you have to get it, you’ll be able to handle the problems and difficulties of life easier.

You see, if we don’t deliberately build our lives around seeking God’s Kingdom, we’re gonna end up building our lives around SOMETHING ELSE!

Jesus said it this way: *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”* Matthew 6:19-20

In other words – you have a choice! You have a choice about what you’re going to build your life around. You can invest your life in the things of this world (things that can be destroyed stolen or die). Or you can invest in that which is eternal… the Kingdom of God!

Too often, folks attach themselves to reality by holding on to things like Love, Possessions, Positions & Wealth. And that’s ok… as long as those things remain part of their lives. But if people suddenly lose those things – because those things have been destroyed, stolen, or die – then life begins to fall apart for these folks. Sometimes this loss can even cause them to descend into despair and hopelessness. That which held them to reality is no longer there, and because of that, these folks can even lose touch with reality itself. Now EVERYONE loses (or will lose) things that are important to them.

Christian or non-Christian, everyone will eventually experience loss.

• A loved one will die.

• Divorce will split the family, or they will face a life-threatening disease..

• Their house will burn down and all their memories they’d stored there will be lost.

• They’ll lose their job.

• And on and on and on.

Everyone will experience loss in life, but what makes a true follower of Christ’s life different from the lives of other people is that - while they may suffer and grieve - their loss won’t destroy them.

As Proverbs 24:16 says *“… a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again...”* Why?

Because true followers of Christ have learned to give their treasures to God.

We see that reflected in the book of Revelation *“the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne…”* Revelation 4:10 They “*cast their crowns before the throne.*” They acknowledged that God owned everything they held valuable.

In the same way, true followers of Christ acknowledge that everything they own belongs to God. Their house, their loved one, their jobs, their possessions – it all belongs to God. It NEVER belonged to them. They never OWNED any of it.

In the days of Jesus, if you called someone “Lord” it meant they “owned you.” They were the master, you were the slave. Now, did a slave own anything? No they didn’t!

In the same way, when we came to Christ we declared Him LORD – we were giving Him everything we were and everything we had. He owns it all. Thus, God owns my house, my car, my clothing, my loved ones, etc. And if I ever lose those precious things… they didn’t belong to me in the first place. Their loss will cause me pain – sometimes great pain. I may weep and I may mourn… but in the end I will be able to handle that grief easier because they didn’t belong to me to begin with. That which I lost belonged to God.

That’s kind of what Paul was saying when he declared: *“…I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”* 2 Timothy 1:12

So 1st – if you learn to seek God’s kingdom first… then life is easier to handle.

2ndly – if you learn to seek God’s Kingdom FIRST, you’ll not be as prone to be haunted by the thought that your life really doesn’t matter. You’ll not be as likely to struggle with the question: “IS THIS ALL THERE IS?”

One of my favorite Psalms is Psalm 103 in verses 15-16 it says: “*As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.”*  It reveals how fragile life is. The wind passes over our place in life and its place remembers it no more. And yet, there’s something about that phrase that annoys me. There’s something inside of me that says: I refuse to go gently into that good night. I refuse to accept that I will be forgotten after I die. And yet, that’s what Psalm 103 SEEMS to be saying. It seems to say I will be forgotten. That is… until you read the next verse.

*“BUT the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children.”* Psalm 103:17

Then, just a few Psalms later… we read this: *“Blessed are those who fear the LORD, who find great delight in his commands. Surely the righteous will never be shaken; they will be REMEMBERED FOREVER”* Psalm 112:1 & 6 What’s going on here?

One passage seems to say I’ll be forgotten… and another says I won’t.

This is what I think God is telling us: Ordinarily people die and they’re NEVER remembered. Like the flowers of the field the wind sweeps over them… and they’re forgotten. They get a tombstone, a statue, or maybe a footnote in history– but that’s about all. BUT… but if a man or woman fears God (if they seek first His Kingdom) – they’re remembered FOREVER. They may not even get a statue or a tombstone, BUT God will remember them. And God’s memory of them will last FOREVER.

I Corinthians 15:58 seems to echo that truth: *“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is NOT IN VAIN.”*

If I stand firm and always give myself fully to the work of the Lord… what I do for Him will not be in vain. It will last FOREVER!

Now, that brings us back to Peter, James and John. These were good Jewish boys. Every Sabbath they’d have been at the synagogue. But they’re not really REAL religious. Essentially they go to church… but they’re just watching the clock, waiting for the preacher to get done so they can go do something Important. Essentially they’re the type of guys who have just been putting in their time.

ILLUS: They remind of the story of a great cathedral that was being built in London. Back in the 1600’s London had been destroyed by a great fire and needed to rebuilt. Most of that rebuilding was the result of plans drawn up by the noted English architect, Sir Christopher Wren. Amongst the buildings he designed were nearly 90 Cathedrals throughout the city. A journalist supposedly was working on an article for his paper and asked 3 of the workers the same question, "What are you doing?"

The first said, "I'm cutting stone for ten shillings a day."

The second replied, "I'm putting in ten hours of my life every day on this job."

The third answered, "I'm personally helping Sir Christopher Wren to construct one of London's greatest cathedrals." The first two men were just putting in their time. The third man was investing in what he perceived was a project that was worth his lifeblood.

Peter, James and John were the guys putting in an hour or so of their time. Their lives were not built around God. They WORKED at being fishermen, but they PUT IN TIME as worshippers. That is – until Jesus showed up. From that day on, they may have fished a little… but they WORKED at being followers of Jesus.

Now, the question for us this morning is this: Are we WORKING at being a follower of Christ? Or are we just showing up and putting in our time? And how would we know the difference?

Well, beyond coming to worship and sitting down in your spot, what are you doing FOR Christ?

• Do you have a ministry you do? Do you have something you do for Jesus beyond coming on a Sunday morning?

• Do you take pleasure in telling people about Jesus?

• Do you pray for your spouse/friends/family, etc. to become Christians? Every Sunday we have a prayer time for people who struggle with diseases and loss and other critical issues in people’s lives. But, do you go beyond that to pray for the salvation of your loved ones and friends? Do you have specific people you focus on in prayer, asking that God would open their hearts to His offer of life?

The point is this: A life that is focused on Jesus will make a difference that will last for eternity. As 1 Corinthians 15:58 tells us: *“… my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”*

CLOSING ILLUSTRATION: Charles Duke was one of only 12 men who have left footprints on the moon. As an Astronaut he was the lunar module pilot for the Apollo 16 Mission and now lives in Texas. He said: “After walking on the moon, I was bored. Fame, fortune, a spot in the history books: I had it all. But if you had been a fly on the wall in my home, you would have seen that I wasn’t so hot. I was failing miserably as a husband and father. My business succeeded, and the money rolled in, but I was bored.”

This was a man who left footprints on the moon. This was a man who had done something with his life. And he continued to do so with a successful and lucrative business. But he didn’t feel he was “going anywhere” It seemed like his life had NO meaning!!

“Though I’d gone to church all my life, I had all of God I needed in that one hour every Sunday. Even the moon had not been a spiritual experience. I wasn’t looking for God. I only knew Jesus the way you know the U.S. Presidents--in name only.”

"But Dottie wasn’t. She had changed. Her depression had lifted and she demonstrated a new, believing faith. She turned to God--not me--for answers to her problems. One night I attended a Bible Study with her that focused on one penetrating question, 'Who was Jesus?' All my life I had said the words 'Son of God' but had never trusted Him. That night I came face-to-face with the opportunity to follow Him… “The next day I awoke with an insatiable desire to read the Bible. It cost the government $400 million for me to walk three days on the moon--and it’s over. But to walk with Jesus is free and it lasts forever!”

**Prayer:** Lord God, we know that there are so many things vying for our full attention is this life, things that can so easily distract us from what is really important, distract us even from what matters for eternity. Open our hearts and mind to the directing of the Holy Spirit in our lives to seek You first and above all other things and to share that with all who we can. In the name of Jesus. Amen.