

Strengthening Hearts - #6 – Strengthened in Love
1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

In this sermon, I want to set God's people free to work hard in their vocations, loving there first.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

9 Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Dear Christian, this is your life!

A _____ life.

A _____ life.

A _____ life.

"My drive in life comes from a fear of being mediocre. That is always pushing me. I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being but then I feel I am still mediocre and uninteresting unless I do something else. Because even though I have become Somebody, I still have to prove that Somebody. My struggle has never ended and I guess it never will." -- Madonna.

Connect Groups – Talk-it-Over

Getting Started

What are some of the positive lessons that you've learned in the "pause" of the corona virus?

Into the Word

Pastor Bourman described the Christian life as productive ("work with your hands"), focused ("mind your own business"), and quiet ("make it your ambition to lead quiet lives"). Which one strengthened and encouraged you the most? Which one corrected you? Which one gave your heart rest? Explain.

Look up one or more of the following passages. What do they teach us about love? (Romans 14:19; Romans 15:1-3; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Corinthians 14:12; Galatians 5:13; Philippians 2:2-4)

What is the connection between "***love one another*** more and more" (cf. 1 Thess 4:9-10) and "***make it your ambition to*** lead a quiet life. You should mind your own business and work with your hands" (cf. 1 Thess 4:11)? Explain how the encouragement relates to the other.

What was Jesus' greatest ambition in life? How did that ambition show up?

Taking It Home (note the closing reminder on the next page)

Pastor Nate gave three questions which help to shine a light on our ambitions: 1) What do I want for my future life? 2) What are the regrets I have about my past? 3) What do I hope for the lives of my children?

Which question do you think best identifies our ambition?

How has this "pause" in our lives been a blessing to us as we evaluate our lives in the light of God's Word?

Take some time over the next week and ponder your ambitions. What needs to change? What needs to stay the same?

Closing Reminder from Pastor Nate. The study of and meditation on this text revealed some darkness in my own heart. Only the blood of Jesus removes it. By God grace, we all have the great joy and privilege of stepping into our callings to love other people within those callings because of his deep love for us. You too are loved by God deeply and dearly. Because of his blood we get to step into our callings as forgiven children of God. I want to re-share here my favorite section of the sermon:

In the quiet of this moment, in the quiet of your home, the one who made this world says, "I know my sheep. I know them by name. And I give my life for the sheep." See, there is proof that you matter, that you're someone, that you are a Somebody in the eyes of the almighty Maker, but the proof is not in your life. The proof that you are Somebody is in his death! He knows you and still, still, he gave his life for you. You matter to him so much that he died for you. You matter to him so much that he put Ceasar Augustus on his throne and Pontius Pilate in his judges seat. You matter to him so much that he orchestrated the whole historical event FOR YOU!

And it's not just that. Your God has given you a resume that is truly astounding. The Bible word we use to talk about this is "justification." It means that God doesn't credit you with things that you did wrong; it means he forgives. It also means that God gives you credit for things that Jesus did. So your resume and your record before God is absolutely beaming! You are fully right with God and this gives us a deeper quietness in our lives. See, this means that we don't have to spend our lives trying to measure up because we already do. We don't have to spend our lives trying to build a full resume of greatness, we already have one! We can love freely, unconditionally, lavishly, abundantly without trying to prove a thing. We are somebody! The death of Jesus proves it and so does his resurrection!

And if God, yes, since God did do this for you, he will also do this through you! That's why the next marvel of his grace and his love for you is this – that he put you where you are, when you are, with the people who are around so that you, yes YOU, would work in their life for them, for their good. You matter to God. The life you live matters to God. The work you do matters to God. The callings you fill matter to God. Dear Christian, this is your life! It's a productive life, a focused life, a quiet life.