

“At A Glance”

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Scripture: Luke 6:20-21, 23a (*English Standard Version*)

Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied.” “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.” Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy!

Sermon in a Sentence: By not taking advantage of our powers of observation in the present, we miss so much in the world around us only looking at a glance. Why do we not pay closer attention?

We all know that children live in a world of the NOW; and as adults, so should we! Children can see everything! And they feel that things should be done at the speed of light, without the dreary of waiting, especially when traveling between places. Don't you just love it when you hear them say, “Are we there yet?”

Children honestly live in the world of – the NOW. I wonder what happened to us when we became adults. For some reason we find it difficult to live in the NOW; especially in the world around us today. And children have unusual powers of observation, but not adults. They can say and see the most unusual things; yet we tend to see things at a glance. I believe it was Thomas Edison, who said:

“The average person's brain does not observe most parts of what we see. It is almost incredible how poor our powers of observation genuinely are.”

So how do we as adults learn to live in the NOW, like our children? I suspect many of you would agree that when things are viewed at a glance, we miss a lot. We don't take advantage of the present moment in the world around us. Why don't we pay closer attention? Well, that's what we are going to explore this morning.

Many if not most of us, know that life is a path. And our lives are made up of a finite number of moments all strung together like a string of pearls. But only too often does life become a destination and not a path. In life, we have goals:

The **dream house**, **our first million**, the **perfect job**, a child who goes to an Ivy League **school**, the **retirement trip** we saved up for years to take.

And then there are the daily goals:

getting to all the appointments, **getting dinner on the table**, or **returning the day's e-mails**.

But on our way to the goal, we sometimes run out of steam. In fact, we feel in the end like we've lost something. Even if we achieve the goal, it may not feel very rewarding when we are finished. It may be we get to the end, and we don't even remember what it is we were trying to accomplish. If we

have our eyes set on the prize, we might miss what the prize really is, because we are too busy living life at glance.

The other day I called a salesman and got his voicemail. The message said that he was on vacation, but invited me, a customer, to page him if I needed anything. Apparently, he lives life at a glance, because he didn't want me to wait. That's nice, but I wondered to myself if he was clear about what a vacation really is. “I have this image of a person lying on the beach, only to be interrupted over and over again by the beep of a pager. He gets back to the office and feels like he has never been away.” So I decided my call could wait a day or two.

Life in general is an attention span challenge. And people have a responsibility to pay attention; but we must learn to live life in the present. Look at these days of cell phones and pagers, and the 24-hour round-the-world news; we can find ourselves so busy keeping up, that we never really show up for what it is we are doing. We're not really there; we are getting ready to get to the next thing. Even if we don't have all of those things distracting us, there's a way they keep us from talking to each other. We get into our own worlds and we shut others out.

And it may not be pagers at the beach, but this is something that can happen all the time. It might be the television on during dinner; it might be the need to check e-mail 20 times a day, or the need to use our cell phone to make sure there are “**no new messages**.” We live in a culture that tells us we need to go faster, faster, faster, and the more we try to keep up, the less we find ourselves not paying attention to the world around us.

In their book, “Spiritual Literacy,” Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat assert that “**All kinds of wonderful and important things are going on directly in front of us and to pay attention**.” **Stay awake and totally alert. See with receptive eyes and discover a world of ceaseless wonders.**”

I heard a story a few years ago about a man and his wife who were out for dinner at a Chinese restaurant just before taking in a movie. They order their food and are sitting there enjoying it, engrossed in conversation, when a hand reaches down and takes the platter of noodles. They hear a voice quickly mumble “Sorry!” and look up to see a thin, poorly dressed woman, leaving the restaurant with the plate of noodles.

They watched her walk down the street holding the plate in her hand and stuffing noodles into her mouth as quickly as she could. About this time, the owner of the restaurant realizes what has happened and takes off out of the front door chasing the noodles thief. He catches up with her and stands firmly in front of her, blocking her way, grabbing the side of the plate. A struggle occurs, the noodles sliding from one side of the plate to the other. The owner finally gets the

upper hand and pulls the plate away; and the noodles go flying.

The woman is left there, empty-handed, with soggy, contaminated noodles at her feet. She stands with her arms hung dejected at her side. The owner walks back to the restaurant with the soiled plate in hand, feeling victorious.

The couple gets a new plate of noodles, even though they had eaten half of the other plate before it was taken. Unable to eat any more, they asked if the rest could be boxed up. They headed off to their movie.

A block later, they came upon the noodle thief. By now the woman is hyper-charged. She simultaneously cries, convulses, and shouts at a man, who quickly runs away from her. The husband wants to get away as quickly as possible too, but not his wife. She walks over to the woman and says, "Ah, we haven't formally met, but about 10 minutes ago you were interest in our noodles. They gave us some new ones. Are you still hungry?"

The woman nods and extends her arms and takes the Styrofoam container in her hands, bows ever so slightly and say, "Thank you, you've very kind."

You see, I am also convinced that living in the present and being mindful does not detach us from the pain of the world, but brings us closer to it – and the same is true for the joy in the world. Living in the present brings us closer to life. It brings us closer to what we need to see and respond to in the present.

So the good news today is this: If we are able to pay close attention to the world around us, we will see -- it is NOW that life is, and that life happens in the moment. And this is what our Bible passage helps us to realize this morning. The passage is from something called *The Beatitudes*. I know it's a pretty big word, but it means "supreme happiness." Let's listen to what Jesus is saying,

"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied." "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy!

In other words, be aware of the NOW, because we can only live and respond in the present. I wish there were instructions for how to live in the present and how to care and love more fully with passion. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer. There are no recipes to follow. But I can tell you that the ingredients are actually within all of us.

You see, the present moment presents us with a mirror and says to us; this is who we are now, these are our strengths, and these are our weaknesses. How do we then live, and how do we respond? The most precious thing that we have is to be here, right NOW!

So how do we become more caring and loving in our lives; we start in the present. We can talk all we want about what

we are going to do tomorrow, but there is a strange way that things don't always happened tomorrow, or ever. Remember the saying,

"Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow hasn't come.

Today is a gift – that's why they call it the present."

For as long as time lasts, every day is "today." Today is the only time we have; right now, this very moment. The past is behind us and we can't recover it, while the future is ahead of us, we can't access it. Today is all the time we have.

So don't say that we'll stop and be more caring and loving tomorrow, because we're too tired today. Love is something that only happens in the present. If we don't show love or give love now, we certainly won't love tomorrow. Love either is or isn't; so love now while paying attention to the world around us. May we be found to be fully present to God, to others and to ourselves. And when we do, we will be doing the work of loving, of living, of growing and of deepening our lives, not at a glance; but in the present of the world around us.

Let us pray! Spirit of Life, hold us this day, hold us this hour, and hold us in this moment. May we be present to this world and its tremendous beauty, its tremendous sorrow, its tremendous calling. In caring and loving, may not view things at a glance, but pay close attention so that we may fully live in the moment. Amen.

Closing:

As we leave here this morning, remember that we miss so much when we view things at a glance. So I certainly hope and pray that each of us will be more attentive.

Have a good Sunday and go in peace. Amen.