

- ***I John 2:1-6*** You might not be aware, but this is an presidential election year. Early voting started this past Wednesday here in Madison County, and the local election office and its workers have been keeping everything running smoothly. Yesterday, while I was helping out in the office, a young lady came in wanting to get vote, but she had a Missouri drivers license. In order to vote you have to have a state of Tennessee or federal issued identification card. She used to live here in Jackson, but within the past few months had moved to St. Louis. Because of her move she was no longer eligible to vote here in Madison Co. My boss informs her of this and then the young lady asks her what she would need to do in order to vote up in St. Louis. My boss speaks with her a few more moments, and then after she walks out exclaims "people need to get their affairs in order if they want to vote!". In my mind a think, "yeah, they need to cause a judgement day is coming.", and then she further says that the day of reckoning is here" and those who have waited too long had lost out. I laughed out loud because I thought it fit so well with my lesson I had planned for this morning.
- Our text we read just a few minutes ago pertains to the subject of forgiveness and our ability to cleansed of our sins because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Just like we have the ability to vote in this country, so we also have the ability to have our sins forgiven. Just as there are requirements in order to vote, there are requirements to forgiveness. Just as there is a time when we no longer have the ability to vote, so are there times when it is too late to gain forgiveness for our sins. This morning, I would like for us to consider 3 times in which it will be too late for forgiveness for us.

I. It's too late once we die.

- A. Our chance to serve God and seek forgiveness for our mistakes is in this life.
 1. I think of the rich man and Lazarus as we consider that this life is our chance to do what is right. **(Luke 16:19-31)**
 2. The rich man begs Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house where his brothers were in need of warning so they wouldn't end up in this torment. **(vv.28,29)** He recognized that they didn't need to waste their chance to do what is right.
 3. Each of us who know the difference between right and wrong will have at some point choose the wrong thing to do. Thankfully, we have the ability through Jesus to seek forgiveness if we are willing to confess our sins, repent of them, and bear righteous fruit to show our repentance. **(I John 1:9 & Matthew 3:7,8)**
 4. God's desire is that we realize our mistakes, change our ways, and bear fruits of repentance. We can't do those things if we pass away from this life.
- B. Some people think that they have time to repent, but we don't know when our death will come.
 1. Far too many individuals leave this life without receiving forgiveness from God because their life ended before they expected. Too many focus on just the things of this life without giving some consideration to their spiritual standing.
 2. Jesus tells the parable about the rich man who focused just on himself and this life without giving any attention to his faith and God. He was called a fool because his life ended before he had time to repent and seek forgiveness for his sins. **(Luke 12:16-21)**
 3. Jesus realizes the truth that our lives truly are vapors and that we can't act as if tomorrow is guaranteed to us. **(James 4:13-17)** It can be here and gone in the blink of an eye.
 4. God wills that we seek His forgiveness for our mistakes, but it will be too late for forgiveness once we die and pass from this life into judgement.

II. It's too late once Jesus returns.

- A. Jesus will return to judge the souls of mankind and their actions.
 1. Peter speaks much about the coming day of the Lord and the judgement that will come along with it. **(II Peter 3:3-14)**
 2. Some people will mock that we say that Jesus will return, but Peter is confident that He will.
 3. Some people might think that He wont return, but Peter knows that Jesus is just giving more people time to repent and seek forgiveness.
 4. The truth is that Jesus will return and it will be unexpected. It will be as a thief in the night and then judgement will take place.

- B. The return of Jesus will come at an unexpected time for all people, and therefore we must constantly be ready so that we aren't caught in a sinful life.
1. Notice that the uncertainty of the timing and the details of what will take place leads Peter to the conclusion that we must constantly be ready for the return of Jesus. **(II Peter 3:14)**
 2. Just as we don't know when our death will take place, we don't know when Jesus will return. In fact, if you take **Matthew 24:36** to be referring to the final judgment then Jesus Himself doesn't even know when His return will take place, but only the Father knows.
 3. It will be too late for repentance and forgiveness if we die or if Jesus returns. We have no control over these two happenings, but let me suggest one more time when it will be too late for forgiveness that we have complete control over.

III. It's too late once our hearts are hardened.

- A. A hardened heart sees no need for obedience, repentance, or forgiveness.
1. When I first think of a hardened heart, I think of the OT account of Pharaoh dealing with God, Moses, and Aaron. **(Exodus 7, 9, 10, 11, 14)**
 2. Pharaoh's heart was hardened towards God and His will for His people, and because of this he refused to repent of his wickedness and follow the will of God by letting His people go. He was not willing to acknowledge the authority and power of God even though His power was shown through the plagues that ravished Egypt.
 3. Many people do the same thing, today. They refuse to acknowledge God as deserving of honor even though His power is clearly evident to them through what is seen in this world. **(Rom. 1:18-21)**
 4. Still there are others who hardened their hearts after obeying Jesus, but they decide to harden their hearts against the way of righteousness that they once walked. **(Heb. 6:4-6)**
- B. The longer we wait or the harder we fight God, the easier it will be to ignore our need to repent of sin.
1. Those who have lived their whole lives in opposition to God will continue to find it easier and easier to reject God because they constantly build up within their minds a resistance to His evidence for existence and power.
 2. Those who once lived in faith, saw the goodness of God, and saw the power of His church but have decided to walk away know how good this life can be. Yet, they have made the decision to leave the grace of God.
 3. There is nothing better out there than this, yet they still leave. These people have hardened their hearts against God to the point that the Hebrew writer uses the hyperbolic language that it is impossible for them to come back because they know exactly what it is that they are missing out on.
 4. Where our death and Jesus's return are out of our control, we must recognize that we are in complete control of the condition of our heart. We decide where our hearts will remain soft for God and His truth or if we will harden our heart to resist God. If we resist God then there no longer remains forgiveness for our unrepentant heart. If we harden our hearts then we are too late for God's amazing grace and forgiveness.

We live in a world where deadlines abound. Sometimes we get behind and we miss deadlines that will negatively impact us, but nothing can negatively impact us more than failing to repent of our sins and seek the forgiveness of God that is made available through the blood of Jesus Christ. May we constantly keep in mind our need to live righteously and holy before our God. May God help us to seek Him when we fall short. May He grant us time to repent. May He help us to resist a hard heart that can turn us against Him. This life will end...either through death or the return of Jesus. May we be ready to stand before Jesus so that we might receive those wonderful words of commendation that we lived this life well and for Him.