

Acts of Jesus – part 27

Famous Epitaphs-

Jesses James – “murdered by a traitor and a coward whose name is not worthy to appear here.”

Jack Dempsey – “A Gentle man and a gentleman.”

John Brown, Dentist -- Stranger! Approach this spot with gravity! John Brown is filling his last cavity.

George Washington – “looking into the portals of eternity teaches that the brotherhood of man is inspired by God’s Word; then all prejudice of race vanishes away.”

Benjamin Franklin – “The body of Benjamin Franklin, printer (like the cover of an old book, its contents worn out, and stripped of its lettering and gilding) lies here, food for worms. Yet the work itself shall not be lost, for it will, as he believed, appear once more in a new and more beautiful edition, corrected and amended by its Author.”

Unknown Soldier – “To save your world you asked this man to die: Would this man, could he see you now, ask why?”

What will be written on your gravestone?

What should be written on your gravestone?

1. Tonight, we’re going to take look at an epitaph from Scripture that we need to strive to make our own.

--**Acts 13:36**

--The ultimate epitaph even though David’s life was far from perfect.

--His list of failures probably is longer than most, but he still was able to serve God’s purposes.

--That should give us a measure of hope!

--**V. 36** -- There is not a higher goal is there?

--How’s that going so for us?

A crucial question for kids when they do something wrong is: Did they do it on purpose?

--It’s one thing to mess up, but it’s another thing to mess up on purpose.

--Doing wrong on purpose carries a heavier punishment.

On the other side of the coin: In the context of doing something right, doing it on purpose makes it even better!

--When all is said and done, I wonder if God will ask us, “Did you do it on purpose?”

--Did you live your life on purpose?

--Did you live your life by default or by design?

--Was it your intent to fulfill My purposes or your own in the brief time you had on earth?

2. Probably need to make a distinction here between God serving our purposes and us serving God’s purposes.

--Too many times we get this mixed up; in fact, sometimes God serving our purpose is the motivating factor behind a lot of our spirituality.

--This selfish current comes to the surface when God doesn’t come through on what we want.

--We feel slighted—we feel betrayed: **“Where is God when I need Him?”**

--We’ve got it all backwards:

God does not exist to serve our purposes. We do exist to serve His.

--Listen to these verses: **Phil. 1:21, Rom. 7:4, II Cor. 5:15**

--Do you hear the order here? Who’s serving whom? Who lives for whom?

--This is a big key to our own happiness.

--Until we figure this out, life is going to be frustrating for us.

3. To serve God's purposes requires a focus shift—it's easy to say, "God I want to serve your purposes", but let's count the cost of having a godly epitaph.

1. A shift in our thinking from just local to global.

--**Acts 1:8** "You will be My witnesses....to the ends of the world."

--**Matt. 28:19a**

--What are you doing to fulfill that mission? Your mission?

Actions:

1. Pray for Missions
2. Pay for Missions
3. Go on Missions

--These things will interfere with your personal pursuits.

2. A shift in our thinking from temporal to eternal values.

--Two places to check our values are our pocket book and Calendar.

--The American dream is not necessarily biblical – Paul and Barnabas were not exactly setting up a nest egg in their journeys.

--**Matt. 6:19-20**

3. A shift in our thinking from security to service.

--The ways God leads aren't always logical and safe.

--God makes plans for our lives based on eternity not time.

4. A shift in our thinking from comfort to sacrifice.

Kevin Greeson – Missionary to Bangladesh talked of how, when they pray for people that God would raise up in that country to continue the mission, they are praying for people who are willing to die for the Gospel.

--What would reach the Hezbollah of Lebanon or the Palestinians of the Gaza strip or the Shiite of Iran? The same things that reached a hardened, militant, pagan world of Paul's day == the blood of martyrs.

--Our brothers and sisters in Christ are sacrificing in this way throughout our world today and yet we turn away from some of the least things because they might cause us some discomfort.

V. 36 – requires service and sacrifice

-- requires living on purpose.

Or else your epitaph may wind up sounding like one of these:

Here is where friend Starkwether lies

Nobody laughs, nobody cries

Where he goes, how he fares

Nobody knows, nobody cares

Another similar: (Grave in a northern state)

Here lies a miser who lived for himself,
who cared for nothing but gathering wealth.

Now where he is and how he fares;
nobody knows and nobody cares.