

Introduction: Pg. ____

The end of the academic year is coming to a crashing end for most of our undergrad and graduate students. Even though it can be a time of high stress and anxiety, it is also a time of relief & rejoicing as another step is accomplished and your focus can shift (perhaps) this summer. Now, I don't want any of you who have 3 finals to take and/or 55 pages to write over the next two days to walk out of the room when I say this, BUT one of the greatest feelings I have every year about this time is the pure joy of knowing, I'll never have to take another final again or write another paper again.

I want you to know that I try to keep it at the level of gratitude and self-satisfaction, but it's really hard for me after all the books and all the papers and all of the lectures and all of the assignments, most very beneficial and instruction, some tedious and an absolute headache; it's really hard for me to not get a sense of pleasure out of your pain as I watch you suffer, because I'll never have to do that again. :) Haha...

Now, there is a measure of sincerity to everything I just said. Aren't you glad? BUT I should also tell you that I really enjoyed my educational experiences particularly the last couple of years of Doctoral Studies. As I entered the dissertation stage, I spent a good deal of time asking God to lead me to a topic that: a) would make a contribution to the field; b) would influence my work in ministry for years to come; and c) I asked God for a topic that I would truly enjoy. And God answered my prayer.

I spent two years becoming really good friends with a dead British pastor from 19th century named Octavius Winslow. This man wrote over 40 books, yet his contributions remained severely overlooked. I spent countless hours pouring his works (at coffee shops, at home lying on the couch, sitting in the chair, before bed, in the morning, at the library, and even *in the car* (usually not while driving!). I set out to analyze his preaching methodology, but in the process I discovered so much more that not only would influence my view of ministry, but also my personal devotion to God and a host of other things like the importance of mothers.

Octavius actually penned a memoir of his mother's life with entries from her journals and letters written to family and friends forming the basis of his work. Mary Winslow was the mother of ten children! And for most of her parenting years, she was a single mother. Her husband died when Octavius was just seven years old. Yet, her faith in Christ sustained her in amazing ways. So much so that Octavius would say in that memoir:

“[H]ow powerful and deathless is the influence of a holy mother! That influence, employed in planting the first seedlings of thought, in shaping the first actions of childhood, still lives to instruct, admonish, and cheer in manhood's riper years. Honoured and privileged are they, around whose toilsome path yet lingers a spell so sacred, a power so gentle, and a charm so holy and persuasive.”

How powerful and *DEATHLESS* is the influence of a holy mother!

Moms: if you're like me, you may be tempted to think that powerful and deathless influence rises out of monumental moments and the monumental attempts you make to give your kids the absolute best (taking your kids to Disney World or sending them off to school), but I want to remind all of us that influence is usually NOT built through the monumental but through the seemingly mundane...

Diapers changed, lunches packed, rides to school, hours at the ball field or dance class, little conversations before bed, the comfort and encouragement you bring simply by your presence, and doing it all with almost no recognition (except of course on Mother's Day!).

I'm about to get emotional up here and I'm not even a mom! But I've experienced this for 35 years from my wonderful mother, Brenda Turley (I love you mom. Happy Mother's Day), and now I get to watch this every day through another wonderful mother named Marsha Turley (I love you Marsha. Happy Mother's Day; she probably won't watch this! Haha...)

When it comes to pouring our lives out for the sake of others, the mundane and monotonous IS monumental!

This morning, as we turn to John 12, we are going to consider...

“The Surprising Value of Death”
John 12:20-50

And, you might immediately be thinking to yourself: man, kind of morbid on Mother's Day. This is Mother's Day (pastor Tanner), not Morbid Day!, And you may be asking yourself: what's this got to do with being an influential mom? That is a great question and the answer to that question is: EVERYTHING.

The Point: The monotonous is monumental when living is dying and dying is living.

Jesus was nearing the end of his life. His popularity soared as he continued to teach about the kingdom of God and perform miracles that reflected the kingdom of God. You know, small stuff, like raising people from the dead. As he came into the Passover Festival in Jerusalem, huge crowds gathered around to hear him teach and that's where we pick up in John 12:20-26. Some of these were Greeks, non-Jews who adhered to Jewish morals and customs, though did not fully embrace the beliefs of the Jewish people about God and the coming Messiah, who was now standing in their midst.

They wanted to see Jesus, as they request in verse 21. But rather than answering the request directly, the words Jesus say next provide another jolt as we contemplate who he is. He basically says: If they want to see me, they are about to see me. If they or anyone else wants to know me, they are going to have the opportunity to know the heart, the essence of who I am and what I'm all about, and that is by seeing my death.

Look at verses 23-24. “The hour” refers to the time of his coming death. 9 times in the gospel we see Jesus refer to his hour. The first three references all say that Jesus' hour had not yet come; this fourth reference is the first of the remaining references, all of which indicate that his hour had come.

I have two simple encouragements for us as we work our way through the rest of chapter 12 today. The first is this is

I. See what Jesus gained through his death.

Let me give you three of the greatest accomplishments of the cross.

Jesus Reconciles Us Back to God (24 & 32)

- Colin Kruse says: “The coming of the Greeks made Jesus think of the great harvest (not only among Jews but also among Gentiles) that would occur following his death.”
- The fruit that Jesus has in mind is an increasing number of people brought into the kingdom of God through his coming sacrifice on the cross. Just as a grain of the wheat must fall into the ground and die to its present existence, so also Jesus says he must die to bear *much fruit*.

Verse 32 explains this further...

- When Jesus is lifted up on the cross, he will draw all people to himself.
- All people does not mean “all people without exception... [but] people of all ethnic backgrounds” like these Greeks who want to see him.
- The cross, when properly understood and then embraced, is like a magnet. The picture is masses of people, like a crowd flocking into Fenway park around 7:00, but we’re not talking thousands, we’re talking millions and billions of people who are saying: he did *that* and he did *that FOR ME*.
- Spurgeon’s conversion... Look!
 - Snowstorm one Sunday morning,
 - “The minister did not come that morning: snowed up, I suppose. A poor man, a shoemaker, a tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had nothing else to say. The text was, 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter.
 - "There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in the text. He began thus: 'My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, "Look." Now that does not take a deal of effort. It ain't lifting your foot or your finger; it is just "look." Well, a man need not go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look... Anyone can look; a child can look...."
 - Many of ye are looking to yourselves. No use looking there. You'll never find comfort in yourselves.' Then the good man followed up his text in this way: 'Look unto Me: I am sweating great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hanging on the Cross. Look: I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend; I am sitting at the Father's right hand. O, look to Me! Look to Me!' When he had got about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes, he was at the length of his tether.
 - "Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. He then said, 'Young man, you look very miserable.' Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit before. However, it was a good blow struck. He continued: 'And you will always be miserable — miserable in life and miserable in death — if you do not obey my text. But if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.'
 - "Then he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist can, 'Young man, look to Jesus Christ.' There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that moment and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the Precious Blood of Christ."

Have you looked to Christ? LOOK! Don't wait to look. There's nothing else you need to do but look to Christ and embrace everything he offers you in the Cross.

Jesus brought glory to God (28)

Check out *verses 27-28*.

- This reminds us of Jesus in the Garden when he prayed: "not my will, but yours be done." Being truly human, he trembled at the thought of death through the cross, but when he thought of God's purposes in his death, he wanted nothing more. He knew his death would reveal and multiply the glory of God. The reflection of the greatness of his Father.
- You want to learn to pray? Pray like Jesus. "Father, Glorify your name."
- What a great prayer to pray...
- And what does God say from heaven (I love this!): I have and I will. Up to that point, Jesus brought glory to the Father, and from that point, Jesus would continue to bring glory to the Father.
- God never runs out of glory! He has a relentless, unending supply.

Jesus defeated the work of Satan (31)

- He gained the victory. "The cross was the occasion for a definitive conflict between two rulers, between good and evil." – Harris
- This is what Colossians 2:15 is talking about when speaking of the cross says: "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

T: Do you see what Jesus gained through his death? Have you received his gift for you through looking to him and finding life? Now here's the paradox: just as Jesus brings life through death, so also we...

II. Find your life in through your death (24-26)

- If you really want to get in with Jesus, if you want to experience all God desires for you, it's through your own daily dying. The pattern Jesus set for us is the path we follow everyday.
- The call to follow Jesus is a cruciformed life: Life in the shape of the CROSS.
- Read 24-26 again...

How do we live cruciformed lives?

- **Die Daily.**
 - This is what Jesus said: Whoever loves his life loses it. (John 12:25)
 - "If anyone would come after me..." (Luke 9:23)
 - "I have been crucified with Christ..." (Gal 2:20)
 - "I die daily." (1 Cor 15)
 - This is the game changer. Influence comes by dying to ourselves, putting God first in everything, answering the call to however he wants us to live. Putting others before ourselves.
 - If you live a life of sacrificial love, I can *guarantee* you, your life will leave a great mark on those around you. That's the Game changer.

- **Out of Deep Devotion**

- Follow him {in everything} - serving... This is the motivator for dying daily...
- We're following HIM!

Moms, do this for their children. I don't care if you're a working mom, a stay-at-home mom, a single mom, a married mom, a retired mom, even a spiritual mother (you hear me?), this is what you do.

I asked Marsha...

- Your kids are his.
- "Keep running! The pain cannot compare to reward... Don't turn aside. No compromise."
- He gives Beauty to the mundane
- He gives purpose to the grind.
- Mother out of the vertical, not just the horizontal... Every relationship can serve as grace/should serve as grace to make you more like him. You're working to see them change; you're striving to raise them up, but while you're raising them up, he's raising you up, he's changing you. He's a good, good Father.

Mothers who die daily out of deep devotion yield the greatest influence on their children. Even mothers who exemplify dying daily, even if it's not out of deep devotion also will be an immense blessing to their children. When we are at our best, we are exemplifying what we were made for. Sacrifice. Service. Love. Care. Compassion.

We should give it up from moms today and every day. Kids, make your mother glad and cause her to rejoice by honoring her each day.

T: Not Easy, but it is worth it! The cost lasts a short time. The reward last forever.

What do we gain from cruciformed living?

- **We bear fruit, like Jesus (24)**
 - We produce things out of our heart that looks like Jesus. And when we do that we influence others and ultimately point them to the cross of Christ and the glory of God.
- **We gain eternal life, because of Jesus (25)**
- **We dwell forever, with Jesus (26) And...**
- **We are honored by God, like Jesus (26)**
 - We honoring mothers today. We want them to be lifted up, to be recognized, feel appreciated and loved. It's very important, but consider this...
 - God is going to honor us every day forever.
 - That's insane, but it's true.
 - He loves us that much. (Zeph 3:17?)

BLANK

Conclusion:

Do you believe these things? Have you looked to the cross? Verses 37-50 tell us many did not believe in him because their hearts were hardened to God. It even tell us that some who believed who ashamed to say so because they loved glory from men more than glory from God. This teaches that unbelief keeps us from knowing Christ and making Christ known.

What about you? Moms, make Christ known to your children! Friends, make Christ known to your friend

And let's enjoy.

Let's enjoy the life we experience through the death of Christ, AND let's remember

The Point: The monotonous is monumental when _living is dying and dying is living.