

TRANSCRIPTION | Sunday, November 14, 2024 | Be Present | The Good Life Series

We've been in this message series entitled The Good Life, and today we're going to close out that series. And as I was preparing for today's message, I continued to reflect upon one of the most famous verses in the Bible. Many of you can probably quote it. Folks tend to even list it often as their favorite Bible verse. Jeremiah 29:11 where the Lord declares, I know the plans that I have for you.

He goes on to imply that he has a good life intended. He's going to give them a future, and he has a hope that they will prosper. Now, when you think through that verse, that's exciting, that's exhilarating to know that's how God feels about us. But the full context of that verse is actually a little bit different, because the way in which that the Lord actually tells that to his people through Jeremiah is by letting them know that he has had to depart to them from their land.

As a result of the fact that they were not lined up properly with the good life he had originally intended, and that the Lord's hope is that by them being deported from their promised land, they're going to kind of get the memo that there's some things that need to be changed in order for them to be in proper alignment with his good plans for them.

And so what we've been looking at in this series about the good life is how we can avoid spiritual deportation. How we can make sure that we are lined up with the good stuff that God has intended. For instance, in the first week we talked about being grateful and how that that position us in God's presence. In fact, the psalmist says that the way that we enter in to a time of praise and a time of worship is first and foremost with a heart of thanksgiving.

And then the second week, we learned about how being humble can position us in God's protection. The way the Lord put it to us is that if you humble yourself, he'll exalt you. If you exalt yourself, he'll humble you. He puts a protection around those that are humble because he even declares that he will be near to them.

He'll be close to them. And then last week, we talked about how that being generous positions us in God's provision. Now, this morning, I want to talk to you about being present and how that can help to position us in God's purpose. Being positioned in God's purpose. Now I get it, man. We live in a fast paced, distracted world.

There are no shortage of hindrances. But today I want us to evaluate how that we can learn to live in the moment, how that we can learn to embrace relationships, how that we can learn how to even more effectively recognize God's presence, and how that's going to lead to alignment with some really good stuff in our life, spiritually speaking.

Now, studies show that, 60% of adults are now communicating that they regularly lose sleep as a result of scrolling through their phones. For instance, maybe they wake up in the late night hours or the early morning hours and they just start to scroll. And then the next thing you know, a few seconds is turned into minutes, and minutes is turned into hours.

And then they've lost an extended period of sleep. And what's happening is that is affecting people's day to day lives, in a very profound way. 89% of people are saying that on regular occurrences, they schedule time to build relationships or to connect with someone in a meaningful way, only to wind up distracted by their phone in that time of connection.

They're also saying now that the average human being that their attention span is only eight seconds long, that every eight seconds we're struggling to maintain attention. You do realize that in the bull riding world, if you can stay on a bull for eight seconds, you want, and that now trying to hold our attention is about the equivalent to trying to ride a bull.

And yet when you look at the example that Jesus Christ set in his life and in his ministry and in his teachings, it just seems like he was perpetually attentive, that he just knew how to engage in the moments that he was so good at embracing relationship and recognizing God's presence on the earth. And there may be no place where that we really see God's heart portrayed in this regard.

Outside of the cross, better than what we would see in Luke chapter ten. In Luke chapter ten, Jesus gives a parable. And I'd like to share it with you. It says this A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell into the hands of robbers. And they stripped him, and they beat him up, and they fled, and they left him half dead.

And a priest happened to be going down the road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in the same way a Levite, when he arrived at the place, he saw him, and he passed by on the other side. But there was a Samaritan on his journey. And he came up to the wounded man, and he saw him, and he had compassion.

And he went over to him, and he bandages wounds. He poured in oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, and he brought him to an end. And he took care of him. Then the next day he took money and he gave it to the innkeeper. And he said, I want you to take care of this man.

And when I come back, I'll reimburse you for whatever you spend. Now Jesus asked, which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? The one who showed mercy to him? The Pharisee replied. And then Jesus said, go and do the same. I want you to help Jesus preach for just a minute.

Look over at somebody and tell them, go and do the same. Go and do the same. When Jesus presents the story of a good Samaritan. He is really hitting on an extremely controversial topic, especially considering the way in which that he packages the storyline. Jesus talks about a Levite in that day. A Levite was somebody that would work in the temple.

It was somebody that had come from a lineage among the Jewish people that was ordained even by birth, for that particular position. He would have dedicated his entire life to religious activity. And though he could have possibly been a priest, he typically was an assistant to a

priest. So when you mention Levi, you're talking about somebody that their entire life is generationally dedicated to being involved in religious activity.

And then the priest obviously, again, mentioned somebody who is given to religious activity. His whole life would have been given to being an intermediary between God and humanity. His whole life dedicated to being in the temple and being involved in certain things that surrounded the subject of worship. And then Jesus mentions a Samaritan, and for the Jewish people, that was a significantly divisive topic, because when the Babylonians, took Israel into captivity, one of the things that happened is there were a group of people that moved into Israel, and they were of a mixed race, and they took over a region of land that became known as Samaria.

And so the Jewish people considered these people unclean, even though they started to embrace certain beliefs associated with Judaism. In fact, they built their own temple. The Jews went and tore it down. So they went and tried to build another one. And the Jews were constantly bringing conflict to them. But it eventually reached the point where that the Jews would not even walk through the region of Samaria, known as Samaria, for fear that they would become spiritually unclean.

So when Jesus says that the Levite didn't stop and help the man, when Jesus says that the priest didn't stop and help the man, but then he points out that the Samaritan is the one that stopped. He's he's touching on subjects that are filled with controversy. So let's talk about the priest and the Levite for a moment. Now, now, understand, as far as we know, this is a parable.

This is a story. And the way that Jesus presents it. Is he trying to say that the Levite and the priest were bad people? There's a lot of different ways that you can break it down, but when you really try to make sense of it, I think maybe what Jesus is saying more than anything else is simply that they were not living in the moment.

Now, when you think about attempting to sync your life up and align your life up with the good life that the Lord has intended for you, a key part of that is going to be living in the moment, especially if you're going to be present. Here's something that, Jesus exemplifies throughout his life and ministry. The point of being present.

You see it over and over again. There's a place where that Jesus is at a well, and you would think that he's just going there to get some water. And then there's this woman that walks up and she's adulteress. So her life is filled with sexual immorality. And yet Jesus begins to minister to her in such a way that she has a life changing event.

She becomes an incredible messenger on behalf of Jesus, going back and telling the whole city everything he's done for her. In fact, Jesus even gives her one of the most profound revelations of the subject of worship in the entire Bible. Like Jesus was living in the moment. And then we see that there's this place where in Matthew nine, Jesus is walking through a little street.

And something about the archeology of Israel points out that these streets sometimes were no more than like eight feet wide. And so when you think about there's this press of people that

would be barely more than what some larger buildings would have for a hallway. And all these people are around Jesus. And there's this one woman that is desperate.

She's spent everything that she has trying to get help. Doctors can't resolve it. She's been exiled from society. She's been kicked out by her family. And yet she just knows she's got to touch Jesus. And so she grabs hold of Jesus. And the Bible says that Jesus stops and he makes the moment holy. And he turns around.

He says, who touched me? And in that moment they're like, Jesus, are you crazy? Everybody's touching you. Everybody's pressing up around. You said, no, no, no. Somebody didn't just go through the motions. Somebody touched me with faith. They didn't just feel a pile on Sunday morning or just go through this, tick box of singing a few songs, like Somebody Really Touched Me and Jesus leaned into the moment he lived in the moment.

And the Bible says that that woman was healed as a result of it. Now, even when Jesus is hanging on the cross, he's going through horrific pain. I mean, imagine the torture that was associated with being whipped and being beaten and then being crucified, and he's so living in the moment that he's not even focused on his own pain.

He looks down and he sees his mother and his heart is broken for her, and he starts communicating with her that he wants to make sure that she has a son to take his place after he leaves the earth, and he communicates to her that John is going to become like a son to her. He's living in the moment.

And so I think at least the question that like, what is keeping you and me from living in the moment? Like some of us, we miss the moment at the well because we're not being present. We couldn't talk to that person. They've got a bad reputation, and we don't want to be seen in public with them or, you know, leaning into that conversation too long.

We miss the moment with the issue of blood and that woman's pain, because there's just so much pressure on me and there's just so many people tugging on me, and there's just so many different people that want stuff from me that I just, I just can't be present. And we miss the moment to even lean into our family relationships sometimes, because I'm just going through so much crisis right now.

I'm going through so much difficulty right now. I'm going through so much pain right now that that we just aren't present. And so I think maybe when we're looking at our lives and we're asking for the help of the Holy Spirit to really align us with the good things that God has. Like one of the things we have to be aware of is whether or not we are effectively being present.

You know, something else that affects us is worry. And we're worrying about the future. We're worrying about the things of the past and dwelling on them. We're missing the beauty of today's opportunities. It's almost like we don't hear Jesus saying out of Matthew 634, therefore don't

worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble as its own.

Like I'm sure you're like me. That and sometimes, even though you try to be present, your mind gets fixated on something that you're concerned about and you think you've just been thinking about it for a few moments, and then you look up and you've lost an extended period of time to trying to think through, how are you going to fix that, and how are you going to fix that?

And how are you going to resolve this? And. It's amazing. Sometimes the incredible blocks of time that worry takes away from us being present. And when worry don't get us, then often it's hurry that does. And it's a result of being overcommitted and we're constantly trying to multi-task and. We're in a hurry. Like when I look at the story of the Good Samaritan, that's one of the things that sticks out to me.

It makes me wonder, like the Levite, the priest, where they just in a hurry, like had they overcommitted themselves, where they follow in a tight schedule, where they in some way, like totally occupied with where they had to get to next, that they missed a divine appointment. They missed a kingdom connection. Like when I look back over my life and I'm honest with myself, the places that I've missed the most amount of God moments were when I was in a hurry.

The thing I love about Jesus says that he exemplifies that he could be fully intending to go to a particular place. And then the Bible points out on multiple occasions, especially in the book of Mark, he would be moved with compassion and he would totally redirect his life. There's a lot of things you can see about Jesus, but one thing you'll never observe is him being in a hurry.

In fact, one of the ways that Jesus describes himself as he says, I am gentle. Have you ever noticed how that is almost impossible to be gentle and in a hurry? At the same time? Some of y'all act like you ain't never had no road rage. Till the day I had to be in Nashville by a certain amount of time.

We were. We were running behind. We knew that rush hour traffic was about to kick into gear. Right as we were coming into Nashville. And so I was being quite aggressive on the road. And, you know, I don't really know what set the person off in the car beside me. But at some point they started speaking to me in some very unkind sign language.

And and I admit that I didn't handle it in the most gentle way because I was in a hurry. And so I may or may not have communicated a few things verbally to them. You guys are.

And then you know how it works, right? That you pull up to the stoplight as you're exiting the interstate and they're right beside you and you're like, man, I thought I had gained all of this time. And they're right beside you. And so I just gotta, you know, hey, good game bro. Good game. My daughter said, what in the world are you doing?

I said, it was just competition. I just had to win. Good game, good game. How many times in our lives have we missed a God moment? Because hurry took the gentleness out of our spirit. Heard the story of a little boy who had been gifted with a puzzle and he was so excited to have, and he got him a little bored and he was trying to put the pieces together.

Y'all had all the pieces in his pocket. And as he was on a subway and when the subway stopped at his destination, he starts to get off of the train and he's trying to be so careful with this little puzzle pieces. And there was a businessman that was in a hurry, and he bumped into the boy on his way off the train, and he dropped his puzzle and the pieces went in every direction.

And another man just sees it happening and mood with compassion. He walks over and he kneels down beside the little boy, and he starts helping pick up his pieces. And the little boy looked at him and he said, Mr.. Are you Jesus?

I wonder how many times we've missed the opportunity to be Jesus in somebody's life, because we just stay in such a hurry. You got to be careful with worry and hurry because they will keep you from being present. Jim Elliott famously said, wherever you are, be all there. Wherever you are, be all there. And when it comes to being present, a place where that that kind of philosophy is going to be really important is in embracing relationships.

You know, I think there's often an overlooked element associated with Jesus and calling his disciples. In Mark chapter three, we get the storyline of how Jesus looks into a multitude and he picks 12. But I want you to notice the context. Jesus went up to the mountain. He summoned those he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed the 12 whom he also named apostles.

Watch this to be with him, to send them out, to preach, and to have the authority to drive out demons. So it's an interesting that what Jesus prioritized above preaching and before, casting out demons was first being with him, that Jesus is communicating to them even in the moment that he's calling them into a new position of leadership, is the most important thing they'll ever have with him.

Is relationship. My mind also goes to the story where that Jesus is visiting his friend Lazarus, his house, and he's there for a meal and for our context and what's coming up this week, you might think about it like a Thanksgiving feast. There's all kinds of activity. There's a lot of people coming over and Martha is in the kitchen and she is banging pots and she is banging pans, and she's trying to get everything put together so that this meal can be just exactly perfect, the way she's envisioned it in her mind.

And she looks over and her sister Mary is not in the kitchen. And since she's over and she's seated at the feet of Jesus and she's listening to Jesus, and Martha gets so upset like she just walks in like any good sibling would do, and just starts giving her sister a real good talking to and ask Jesus, like, why is it that you would let her sit here and do this when I need help in the kitchen?

And Jesus explains that what Mary is doing is far more important than what's happening in the kitchen. And sure, there's importance in preparing the meal and creating the opportunity for the family to break bread and bread and engage together. But there's also something to be said for being present and actually embracing the relationship. The thing that Jesus affirmed was the embracing of their relationship, the one that was being present in the moment.

And I think sometimes we are so good at doing more and not so good at being more. Be present. There's a story of two friends that are sitting at the coffee shop and they've gotten together. They're looking forward to having a conversation. And yet while one of them is speaking, the other one keeps glancing at his phone and finally, while the other one just looks over and says, I just got to be honest with you, I can't tell if you're listening to me or if you're texting someone who is more interesting.

The friend said, well, I'm multi-tasking and isn't that our excuse sometimes for not being present is that we are multitasking? And then what happens is that our relationships wind up not being as meaningful as God intended. You know, in my life, I've always tended to be quite driven. I think I inherited it from my parents most of my life.

My dad worked multiple jobs and, I watched my mom do the same. And it's just something that's kind of in my DNA. And so especially, in my late 20s and early 30s, just pretty much sunup to sundown, nonstop. And even after my wife and I began to have small kids, like, I just didn't know how to shut it down, and there would be so many times that I would be sitting at a dinner table, or we would be out to eat, or we'd be around our kids and I would be on the phone.

I'd be texting, I'd be taking calls and checking emails and trying to keep everything going. And I had an office at home. So even when I came home from the office that we had it to church, I would still be working at the home office. And on one particular day it was up a set of stairs and had a prayer room on the backside of it and and a library, office and desk on the front side of it.

And I heard a knock.

And I went downstairs like, what in the world? And there was my little girl and my little boy, and they said, daddy, we were just wondering, can we have a meeting? And I think they have a picture. I brought him up the stairs and they sat down in that little attic office, and they brought their pen and their piece of paper and what's this meeting about?

Well, daddy, we just wanted to see you. And so we figured we needed to schedule a meeting and to make it official, we brought some pen and paper. Something broken me that day. I'm still far from perfect. I still make a ton of mistakes. And being present. But there was this shift in that. In order to embrace a relationship with my five and seven year old children.

They think they have to schedule a meeting.

I wonder who's knocking on your door and you just haven't heard it.

Long for a meaningful relationship with you. Amy Carmichael made this statement you can give without loving, but you will never love without giving. And sometimes the thing that you can give that is of the greatest value is your true presence. I had a first grade teacher, and she would go through the roll call every single morning to call out our name, and you were not allowed to say, here you had to say present as her point was, is that you can be in the chair, and yet your mind and your heart far away and a lot of us, we are filling seats.

We are sitting in couches, we are in cars. We are in workplaces. And we're never really present. Some of you, even in this place this morning, you have struggled to be present for you. It's been like trying to ride that bull to keep your attention focused. Why? Because of all the distractions, all the hindrances, all the stuff that's pulling on you.

But if we're going to be present, it's not just going to be about living in the moment. It's not just going to be about facing relationships. It's also going to be about recognizing God's presence. I can tell you that there is a verse in the Bible that haunts me. It convicts me to my core. There are often times when I go into prayer, and this is the verse that bubbles up above all the rest in Psalm 46 verse ten, be still.

I know that I am God, be still.

We're not good at it. It's awkward. It's weird. Like I said, that and there's people listening on the radio right now that literally thought something happened to the signal. People in church online that thought it froze up. But even in just a few moments of pause, it starts to be weird. But here's the thing Jesus, through his word to the psalmist, seems to equate that being still is essential to knowing God.

And I think one of the reasons that a lot of us don't know God the way he intended is because we do not know how to be still, and there's some bad things that we wind up being aligned with rather than good things, but for no other reason than the fact that there are too many gaps in our knowledge of God, and that that knowledge sometimes is not properly developed simply because of our inability to be still.

And yet the Lord is our Shepherd. We shall not want. He leadeth us beside still waters. He makes us to lie down in green pastures so that he can restore our soul. Sometimes even our soul is not restored because we just don't know how to be still. I think when you really get to the concept of the Sabbath, that one of the things that the Lord would be trying to teach us is the need to be still, and to know him and to learn how to be present.

I've been I've been reading several books on the subject of the Sabbath and and even like from 100 years ago, 150 years ago, just the way that people who follow Jesus approach that is so different than how we approach it today. And one of the concepts that used to be there is obviously not so much putting a focus on a particular day of the week, but yet saying that there's

going to be one day out of every seventh day and I'm just going to be present, I'm going to be present with my family, and I'm going to be present with my relationship with God.

I'm going to set aside some quiet time. I'm going to walk in the woods. I'm going to have a time of reflection. I'm going to enjoy the presence of the Lord. Be present. But we got FOMO. We got fear of missing out. And so we live in this social anxiety, and we feel like we've just got to constantly respond immediately.

And we we gotta keep pressing if we're going to achieve whatever it is that we're striving for. And and so we live with these troubled souls. It reminds me of this wealthy businessman that I heard about. He found a remote cabin and he thought, I'm just going to get some time away because I need it. And so he went up into the mountains and he went out by a lake, and he got his phone out.

He's just sitting there and he's replying to text messages. You're replying to emails, he's trying to go to the voicemails that he's receiving and and he's thinking himself like, I don't get this whole nature thing like, this is boring. He didn't notice the birds. He didn't notice the beauty of the trees. He didn't see the fish jumping. You just sitting there frustrated, scrolling through his phone.

Some time passes and there's an old man that walks by and he's got a little fishing rod with him. And as he comes by, he sees this business man. He notices that he seems to be really disgruntled, and he he just walks up and he says, sir, you okay? You doing all right? Like like what's on your mind?

And you seem frustrated. And the guy just begins with all of his cynicism about how he can't focus, even though he's in such a serene place. And the old man just starts chuckling. He says, you know, when I first started coming up here several years ago, I couldn't hear the birds and I couldn't feel the wind either. My mind was so loud that I didn't notice God's whisper.

But then I realized something. God's voice isn't in the noise. It's in the quiet waiting for me to listen. A lot of us are pleading with God to turn up his voice, and I think God is pleading with us to turn everything else down. Now, I would challenge you, be present, maybe think about beginning each day, just free from distractions and just sitting quietly before the Lord, being still in prayer and Scripture and simply reflecting.

Because here's the thing the good life is not about doing more. It is about being more. It's why we've placed such emphasis in this series on be grateful. Be humble. Be generous. Be present. We're not trying to create a new task list for you with more stuff to do. It's not about doing more, it's about being more. And so I want to challenge you this week.

It's Thanksgiving week. And and some of you, your week will be a little different this week than typical you. Who knows, you might even get a day off.

And as you approach that, some things to consider this week, take intentional steps to be present. Practice living in the moment by limiting worry and hurry. Just practice it like throttle back, worry and hurry. They're going to bubble up on you. They're going to try to get loose in your life, put the reins on it, capture those thoughts.

Embrace relationships by turning off unnecessary distractions during family time or connection opportunities. It is going to be extremely difficult for some of you. But the more difficult it is, the more aware you need to become at how ineffective you have become at being present.

Recognize God's presence by spending uninterrupted time in prayer and scripture. Just set aside some time. Maybe it's a walk. Maybe it's a drive down some country roads. Maybe it's just sitting in a quiet place. But just recognize God's presence uninterrupted time. In Scripture. We live when we live in the moment. If I could give you a bottom line of everything I've said to this point today, when we live in the moment, we embrace relationships and we recognize God's presence.

We reflect the life that God intended for us and that is the good life. Can I get an amen from somebody on a Sunday morning? I'm going to ask him to play some music, and I just I want to have a moment of prayer with you, and I'm going to ask you for a second. Just bow your heads.

Close your eyes. People in church online. Just lean in for a second. Come on, live in this moment for just a moment. Father, there are those of us right now that we just. We're having a little bit of a spiritual reality check. And we realize, Lord, that we're just not good at being present. But, Lord, there are many of us in this room right now that that realize that we don't have a relationship with you.

Oh, there's some of us that if we were honest, we would admit right now we've never been born again, and we've never professed you as our Savior and our Lord. And so, God, we don't want this moment to escape us. Then, above all else, we want to embrace a relationship with you as we recognize your presence being extended to us through the work of your son on a cross called Calvary.

Thank you, Jesus, that you love the world so much that you poured your blood out for our sins, but you took the wrath of heaven against sin so that we could believe in your good work. Be saved. Be born again, and then not perish because of your promise of eternal life. And so, Lord, I believe there's people right now that maybe even they just feel an unction to surrender their life to you.

Maybe some will even go so far as to lift a hand. Not so a preacher can see it, or a church can count it. But to communicate to you, God, I surrender. I surrender this moment to you. I surrender my life to you. I, I invite you, Lord, to just reach down and take hold of me.

Lord, I recognize your presence. Pulling me, drawing me, calling me the Lord. For those that in this moment, through prayer and belief in their heart that are experiencing salvation, I pray God

that they're going to have the courage to confess to anybody and everybody that you are their Lord, that they will never be ashamed, that they will never shy away from acknowledging I'm a follower of Jesus Christ.

I'm in relationship with him. I'm becoming a disciple of his way, in his word and his will.

Lord, I also pray for people who maybe even have a long term relationship with you. Or at least it's been going for a while, and today there's a spirit of conviction that comes over their life through the help of the Holy Spirit to just point out some ways that they're missing out on the good life you intended.

But just this struggle with hindrance and distraction, the inability to be present. And so, Lord, we repent of having missed divine appointments and having missed kingdom connections. We repent of not honoring your command to go and do the same. That Lord, we have passed so many people that were hurt and wounded and broken and in need, and Lord, we were so consumed with what we had on our agenda, what we were doing in our ambition that we missed it.

Quite frankly, Lord, we're tired of missing it. We want to come into sync with your purpose for our lives. So, Lord, let your kingdom come. Let your will be done in Jesus name. This church said Amen. For those of you that are in the room, I'm going to ask you to stand with me to your feet again. Church online I would ask you to stay leaned in for a few moments here.

We're going to have a time of response, and I think this is a great morning for a lot of us to give consideration to just bowing before the Lord and just living in the moment and embracing our relationship with him more fully, more thoroughly, and at the same time, just recognizing his presence in your life, in your family, some of the things he's calling you to, that he's purposing in you and through you.

So as we sing this song, this altar is open. If for any reason you feel a call to come forward, come on, let's go after the Lord.