

The Unwasted Life
Philippians 1:20-21

This is a special day! Today, we celebrate our 6 graduates – Elizabeth, Rachel, Trevor, Kellen, Kevin and Garrett! With graduation right around the corner, we want to tell you something ... Well done! We are excited for you! [P] Now, don't overlook why they call it "commencement." Because you're not merely coming to the end of something ... It's just the beginning – the beginning of opportunities, of possibilities!

Looking forward can be a little intimidating – because we can't see the whole picture. There is much still to be discovered. [P] But the wonderful thing about it ... is that we look forward as those who are loved and led by the Lord.

Let me ask all of us ... Is it possible to waste one's life? [P] Few things make me tremble more than the possibility of taking this onetime gift of life and wasting it. I once read a plaque hanging on a wall, and the words have stayed with me: "Only one life, twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last" ... I don't know about you, but I want to live my life well! It is so short and so fragile and so final. You get one chance to live your life.

So ... what is the un-wasted life? What does it look like? [P] What we learn from our scripture this morning is: **The unwasted life is one that puts the value of Christ on display for the world to see.** Pastor John Piper puts it this way: "The passion of the unwasted life is to joyfully display the excellence of Jesus by the way we live." Life is given to us so that we can use it to make much of Christ. Possessions are given to us so that by the way we use them, we can show that they are not our treasure; but Christ is our treasure.

Our passage, perhaps more than any other, shows what life is really about. The Apostle Paul writes: "It is my eager expectation and hope ... that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death." (Phil. 1:20)

Paul's all-consuming passion was that, in his life and in his death, Jesus Christ be honored. For the follower of Christ, there is one central criterion that should govern all the decisions you make in life and in death: Will this help make Jesus Christ look like the treasure he is?

How does Paul show that Christ is his treasure *in life*? [P] The answer can be found in Phil. 3:8: "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ... I consider it all rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him."

Which means that the life that displays the worth of Christ – the unwasted life – is the life that uses *everything* to show that Christ is more valuable than *anything*. Money is used to show that Christ is more valuable than money. Your time is used to show that Christ is more valuable than your time. Phones, computers, cars and houses are used to show that Christ is more valuable than they are. Even your own life is something to show that Christ is of greater value.

The way we display the supreme worth of Jesus in our lives is by treasuring Christ above all things ... and then making life choices that show that our joy is not finally in things, or even in other people, but in Christ.

And the same is true in the second half of what Paul said in Philippians 1:20, namely, honoring Christ by the way *he dies*. "It is my eager expectation and hope that ... Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or **by death**." How do we make much of Christ and display his worth by our death? [P] Paul gives the answer in the next verse (21): "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is **gain**."

Why is death gain? [P] Jump to verse 23: "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is **better by far!**" Death is gain because death means more of Christ. It means to be with him!

How do you show that Christ is a treasure? [P] By seeing death as gain. When Jesus is more precious to you than all that life can give, then being with him through death will be gain.

And it will be plain to all that Christ is your treasure, rather than anything on this earth.

So, the essential lesson for living the unwasted life is as follows:

1. Life is given to us so that we can show forth the supreme value of Christ.
2. The supreme value of Christ will be evident in your life when you treasure him above all earthly things and persons.
3. **This treasuring of Christ above all else is most clearly seen in what you are gladly willing to risk, or to sacrifice, in order to enjoy more of him.**

Here is the radical way Paul put it in 2 Cor. 12:9–10: “The Lord said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ [There’s more of Christ!] Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, and loss. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

So, I ask all of you now, are you going to cast in with the rest of the world by striving to minimize your suffering and maximize your comforts in this life? Are you going to work to lay up treasures on earth? Are you going to live for the praise of others?

Or, **will you see in Christ, crucified and risen, the all-satisfying treasure of your life?**

Will you say with Paul, *“To live is Christ and to die is gain ... I count everything as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”*?

May your passion be to display the worth of Christ. May you treasure him above all things. And may the glory and grace of Christ shine through your life in all the days to come. Amen.

[Elizabeth, Rachel, Trevor, Kellen, Kevin, and Garrett, please come forward]

This is a day to rejoice over one journey coming to an end (finally!) and another one just starting (what does the Lord have in store?) So, as your Riverlawn family, we do more than wish you well; we pray the Lord’s blessing upon you in all your endeavors! And this is our charge to you: Continue to build on the right foundation – the Rock, Christ Jesus. Continue to seek after him in

all the days to come, wherever you may be, whatever you set your mind and heart and energy toward. And as an expression of our love for you, and our celebration of you, we want to present to each of you a gift that we pray will be light to your path all along your journey ... [Bibles]

The Apostle Paul offered some wise words to Timothy, his son in the faith, and I offer them now to you: *"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).*

Let's pray: Lord, as these young men and women begin a new journey, we ask your blessing upon them. May they seek after you; may they find their strength and refuge in you; and may their faith and life be deepened by the Spirit of Christ with each new day. Give them a singleness of heart and action to honor you. May they be rooted and established in your love. May they each be like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding fruit in every season for your glory. May this be true for all of us. Give us passion to display the worth of Christ. May we treasure our Savior above all things. And may your grace be evident in our lives in all the places you send us. To you be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction: *"This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless ... filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ ... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 1:9-11, 6)