

## “All in the Name of Jesus”

On our welcome sheet is a space where people can suggest sermon topics they would like me to preach on. Recently someone suggested this topic: *How can we honor God in our daily life?*

As I began to think about this subject Colossians 3:17 came to my mind as a good Scripture text: “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.” The Apostle Paul is writing to Christian believers, and he says whatever we do – in our words, in our actions – do it in the name of Jesus. “Do *everything*...”. Some translations read: “Do it *all* in the name of Jesus”. Not “do *some* things”. Not even “do *most* things”. But do *everything* in Jesus’ name.

*Let’s turn to this passage in Colossians 3.* Notice, this verse begins, “*And whatever you do...*”. So this is added on to something that was written before that. And if we read what came *before Colossians 3:17*, we get some specific instructions on what to do and what not to do if we’re going to do everything in Jesus’ name. For instance, going back to Colossians 3:1-3, it says, “So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

Then he lists things to do, or not to do – specific ways to *honor God in the way we live*.

Verse 5: “Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry).” Get rid of evil and impure thoughts and desires!

Verses 8 and 9: “But not you must get rid of all such things – anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing you have stripped off the old self with its practices.” Avoid foul and malicious language and talk!

Verse 12: “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, cloth yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” Act with kindness, compassion, patience!

Verse 13: “Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” Bear other peoples’ faults and forgive!

Verse 14: “Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Show love!

Verse 15: “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.” Have a peaceful spirit and be thankful!

Verse 16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.” Let Christ’s words dwell in us, teach and admonish others, be thankful, and sing praises to God!

These are ways we can honor God day by day! But we can go back even further in Colossians and find other instructions on how to do everything in the name of Jesus, and honor God each day.

Of course, we have all the rest of the Bible that gives us instructions on how to live, including the words of Jesus! So, maybe all of what I have said shows that there is an easy answer to the question, “How can I honor God in my daily life?” (At least the question is easy to *answer*; certainly not easy to do)! *Do what the Bible says! Do what Jesus says and commands.* After all, didn’t Jesus say, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

*End of sermon!*

You may be thinking: whoopee-do! Profound! I could have come up with that myself. How much time did you spend on this sermon? You’re not earning your pay! *So, we honor God in our daily life by doing what the Bible says, and doing what Jesus says and what Jesus commands.* Ok. This may be true, but is it really that helpful? *So let’s give it another try.*

Colossians 3:17: “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.” That’s still a good text, and a good place to begin.

***Some of us may worry that if we do everything in the name of Jesus that we’ll have to spend the whole day being “religious”.*** We’ll turn into a Christian fanatic, a religious nut, with religion oozing out of our kazoo! If we are totally devoted to the Lord, nothing else will be on our mind.

ESPN recently showed a documentary about a lady named Shelly Pennefather. It’s a tender, moving story called “A Long Embrace.” This newspaper article talked about the television documentary. “Friends, family and teammates of Villanova women's basketball star Shelly Pennefather gathered this past June for long-awaited embraces with the former athlete. Twenty-five years of waiting, in fact.

“The extended time between hugs was because Pennefather – the best women's player in Villanova's history – had stopped playing basketball professionally to become a nun and live a strictly cloistered life. Pennefather starred as a forward for the Wildcats from 1983 to 1987. During her collegiate career on the Main Line she was named an All-America, won the Wade Trophy as the best women’s basketball player and was selected three times as the Big East player of the year. Pennefather scored 2,408 points in her Villanova career, still more than any player on the women's or men's team in the school's history. She would go on to play basketball professionally for three years in Japan before she made the binding decision to leave the game forever and commit her life to her faith.

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“In 1994, on the verge of making \$200,000 annually to play basketball, Pennefather joined the Monastery of the Poor Clares in Alexandria, Virginia, an order of cloistered nuns who live by strict rules – the nuns do not to sleep for more than four hours at a time, are limited to one meal

per day, do not wear shoes, have daily intense prayer, and are restricted from physical contact with others.

“This year, on her first 25th anniversary at the monastery, Pennefather, now Sister Rose Marie, was allowed to embrace with her loved ones, as she will be every 25th year. The private moment was captured by ESPN for a feature airing on Saturday, Aug. 3 and includes Villanova women's basketball coach Harry Perretta, who says he still visits Sister Rose Marie annually.” (I watched a clip from this, and it showed her embracing her aged mother – the first time they’ve touched in 25 years, and no doubt the last time they will ever have physical contact again). I admire her devotion to Jesus and her faith...but...I just don’t know. So we may say, “If that’s what it means to do everything in the name of Jesus, I *don’t want to be like that!*”

We don’t have to be. While that may be the calling of a few, most of us will not spend most of our life in a church or a monastery. But we can certainly honor God each and every day. Here are some thoughts on how we might do that.

***First, begin the day by offering it to God.*** Even if you are working the night shift and your “day” begins at 4 or 5 p.m., offer the next 24 hours to God. Ask Him to be part of our day, that He will guide us so we can bring glory to Him.

***Next, stay in touch with God throughout the day.*** Throughout the course of the day think of God, and offer a little prayer. You don’t have to close your eyes – just breathe a little prayer for a co-worker, the student sitting next to you. If you’re listening to the news, breathe a prayer for people in the news. If you hear a siren, pray for the person or persons in need of help and the responders. If you say hi to a neighbor, offer up a little prayer for him or her after you’re done talking. If someone hurts you or lets you down, pray for that person, and for yourself.

Get the point? These little “prayer balloons” that rise up to God throughout the day help keep God present and our mind focused on how to please Him. Think of God throughout the day. Talk to Him. Listen for His voice in all you do.

***Then too, realize the sacredness of all of life.*** Every moment is a sacred moment. Everything we do has spiritual importance. What I do tomorrow morning if I go to work, or I’m mowing the lawn, or I’m traveling in the car, or I’m watching the grandchildren, is just as sacred as what I’m doing here in church. If I’m eating out with friends, at a ball game, relaxing on vacation, shopping at a grocery store – these activities are just as “spiritual” as when I’m singing a hymn in church or reading my Bible at home! It’s important to get rid of the artificial separation of the “sacred” and the “secular”. Like things we do in church are sacred; everything else we do the rest of the week is “secular”. It’s “compartmentalization” – here’s a box for our work, another for our hobbies, one for our social activities, etc., and here in this box is our “religion”. Not so!

*All of life is sacred. Everything we do has spiritual significance.* So even though we may not *think* that the ordinary things we do just to make a living and make a life are important to God and can further His kingdom and will, they are! Brother Lawrence was a sterling example of

this. Brother Lawrence was a French monk who lived in the 1600's. His writings were collected and published in a classic book called *The Practice of the Presence of God*. In the monastery, he was assigned to the kitchen – to cook, and to clean, at the constant bidding of his superiors. He was able to develop the attitude that we can do our common activities – no matter how mundane or routine - solely for the love of God.

The key was the *motivation* behind what we do. Brother Lawrence said, “It is (not) needful that we should have great things to do...we can do little things for God; I turn the cake that is frying on the pan for love of him...it is enough for me to pick up a straw from the ground for the love of God.” In everything he did, he attempted to do it for the love of God.

So, we want to honor God in our daily life? Can we see the sacredness of all we do, and strive to do everything for the love of God? Doing our job for the love of God? Caring for our children or grandchildren for the love of God? Stacking the dishwasher for the love of God? Dusting or running the vacuum for the love of God? (Lord help me on this one!). Reading or knitting or sending an email for the love of God?

*However, I also think it needs to be said that honoring God in the daily tasks also means we concentrate on these tasks assigned to us and do them to the best of our ability.* For instance, most employers don't want us meditating on God or being distracted with praying when we're getting paid to do a job! When I'm in a plane I want the captain and first officer concentrating on the landing, not ruminating on some theological truth. I want a surgeon concentrating all of his or her attention on my surgery, and not focusing on God's greatness! We honor God by using our talents and abilities to the fullest when a job needs to be done!

Our text tells us, “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17).

One more thought on how we can honor God in our daily life. ***Do only those things I can honestly do in Jesus' name and with His blessing.*** To do everything “in Jesus' name” means to do only those things *consistent with His character. To do things of which He would approve.* We know, don't we, that there are some things just not Christlike. Kind of like that old WWJD – “what would Jesus do”. So this rules out lying, or cheating someone. Deliberately hurting someone. Doing something we know is immoral or unethical. These are things we can't really do in Jesus' name.

*Do everything in Jesus' name. But doesn't that raise some interesting questions?* Not to be crude, but: *Can I change the cat litter or clean up my dog's poop in the name of Jesus?* Yeah...those are a part of life! We would hardly glorify God if we never changed the cat litter!

*What about sex, “making love”?* Can I make love in Jesus' name? Of course! That's a part of life. The Song of Solomon in the Bible celebrates the gift of our sexuality. It's an erotic love poem! We can certainly honor God if the partner is our husband or wife, and we are showing unselfish consideration for our partner in the love making process.

*Can I watch TV in Jesus' name? Or watch a movie in Jesus' name?* Can I honor God by sitting in front of the TV throughout the day or evening? It depends. What are we watching? What effect does this program have on our mind and heart. Or maybe even we can ask whether God wants us to be spending this time in front of the TV screen, or would we be better serving Him doing something else with that time?

Author Richard Baxter has some interesting comments. "Spend your time in nothing which you know must be repented of; in nothing on which you might not pray for the blessing of God; in nothing which you could not review with a quiet conscience on your dying bed; in nothing which you might not safely and properly be found doing if death should surprise you in the act."

So there you have it. Yes, *we can* honor God in our daily life! Realizing the sacredness of every moment and every day...knowing that even the most mundane and routine tasks have spiritual significance and can be done for the love and glory of God...seeking to do only those things that are consistent with Jesus' name and character.

I'd like to close with a little poem from Sybil Leonard Armes:

"Let every corner of this day  
become an altar, Lord for Thee.  
A quiet place where I can pray  
and hear Thee talk to me."

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*September 1, 2019*

