

Belongings Or Belonging?

Joe Slater

“What do you want for Christmas?” I already have my two front teeth, so my stock reply is, “I don’t know” (shrug). That frustrates the ones asking, but it’s true! I have no pressing needs. Even my wish list is pretty much empty.

Each passing year makes it clearer that the things I really need and want can’t be purchased with money! As our Savior so aptly put it, *“One’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses”* (Luke 12:15). I want the presence of (not presents from) my family. I want their health and safety, and above all their close walk with God.

I don’t need more belongings, but I definitely need a sense of belonging. God Himself said it isn’t good for us to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Family fills that need for belonging in marvelous ways! For that very reason, Satan relentlessly attacks the nuclear family. As early as Eden he pitted Adam and Eve against each other. Today his agents seek to redefine what a family is. Destruction of the family opens the door to finding that sense of belonging in unwholesome places.

As precious as earthly families are, I also need to belong to God’s spiritual family. The love, fellowship, and support of brothers and sisters in Christ surpass anything money can buy. By myself I won’t survive, but as we mutually strive to serve God our Father and Jesus our Elder Brother, we will enjoy certain victory! Satan throws roadblocks the church’s way just as he does with earthly families, tempting us to find our sense of belonging in worldly organizations or even false religious groups. Let us remain steadfast!

I hope you get just what you want and need for Christmas: not mere belongings, but belonging.

Boast Not Of Tomorrow

“You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow” James 4:14.

We are a people who regularly make plans for things we intend to do at a later date. We make plans for where we are going to go tomorrow and what we are going to do when we get there. We plan to attend events. We make vacation plans months in advance. Yet none of us knows what our life will be like an hour, a day, or a month from now (James 4:13-16). Tomorrow can be, and often is, a most dangerous word. We should, yea, we must understand that our lives do not consist solely of “I intend.”

How many kind words of encouragement have we left unspoken? How many times have we failed to just say “I love you”? How many opportunities have we lost to help strengthen someone carrying a heavy burden (Galatians 6:10)? Over the years I have heard individuals say, “I know I should do this or that, and one day I’m going to.” Oh, the things we intend to do – just not today!

James’ words should echo through our minds: *“You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow”* (4:14). Tomorrow the desire to do what we intend to do may be gone. Tomorrow may see us incapable, or we may simply forget. Tomorrow could find us dead (Ecclesiastes 9:10). I suggest that there are two things certain about this life, namely, that life itself is full of uncertainty, and the day is coming in which we will die (Hebrews 9:27). The moment our heart beats for the last time will mark the end of all opportunity for us to do that which we intend to do.

“Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit” (Luke 12:35 NASB).

--Charles Hicks

Let It Rain!

As a figure of speech, rain frequently describes positive feelings of blessing. As an example of how we should love all men, Jesus directs our attention to the Father who consistently and impartially *“sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous”* (Mt. 5:45). As one of the distinguishing marks of the Messianic age, Ezekiel says, *“there shall be showers of blessing”* (Ezekiel 34:26). Such a thought captured the attention of Daniel W Whittle who, in 1883, penned the words of a hymn by that title. Rain is a wonderful blessing, especially following a long season of drought. For that reason alone, it is a fitting metaphor describing the blessings God pours out upon us on a daily basis

On the other hand, rain is sometimes a suitable description of the sad times that everyone experiences in this life. Beloved American poet of the 19th century, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, is famous for having said, “Into each life some rain must fall.” As if to emphasize the point a bit further, he added, “Some days must be dark and dreary.” We often forget the benefits brought about only as a result of trying times. James writes, *“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”* (James 1:2-4). Someday, we may look back at our rainy days as the time when we experienced our greatest spiritual growth.

We fight against the inevitable rain when, according to Longfellow, “The best thing to do when it is raining is to let it rain.” What can we do about it? Undue concern for things over which we have little or no control is a waste of time and adds nothing to our lives (Matthew 6:25, 34). Instead, we should embrace such seasons as opportunities to grow closer to the Lord. Or, at the very least, turn these matters over to the Lord in prayer. Before admonishing us to prayer and thanksgiving, the apostle Paul exhorts us, saying, *“Be anxious for nothing..”* (Philippians 4:6). Trust God. Cast your anxieties over to the One who cares for you (1 Peter 5:7). Then, let it rain.

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)