

A Bible verse for this All Saints Day message: *“Christ is our life, and when he comes again, you will share in his glory.”* [Colossians 3:4 NCV] If you are using SermonNotes this morning, circle the words, *Christ is our life.*”

The weather is changing. Most of you who golf have put away the clubs for the season. But we can still begin this morning’s message with a golf story: a true story.

“While visiting in Great Britain, President Ulysses Grant was invited out on the links to witness a game of golf. After watching for a while, Grant decided to give the game a try.

“The General looked earnestly at the ball, then at his club. He measured the distance carefully and swung. His club struck six inches above the ball.

“Disappointed by this failure, Grant made a more careful estimate of the length of his club and the distance to the ball. He swung again. This time the club struck the ground one foot before reaching the ball. The General made several more efforts to hit the ball, but without success.

“General Grant returned the club to the caddy. He then said to those around him: “I had heard the game of golf was good outdoor exercise, especially for the arms. But I fail to see what use there is for a ball in this game.”¹

Let us pray: Lord, if we are honest, we sometimes fail to see how great it is that you are our God. Sometimes we fail to see the use of the living God in our everyday lives. Help us to understand at a more meaningful level that you are important to us every day – you are our life. Amen.

Last Sunday in his radio show, Garrison Keillor talked about the meaning of life for Minnesotans. Keillor said that all summer long Minnesotans consider the purpose of life: they study it and talked about it and reflect endlessly on it why we are here.

Then, Keillor said, winter comes and shows us clearly the purpose of life! Psychology Professors and Sociology Professors may tell us that life has three purposes:

1. The first purpose of life is survival. Keillor is correct. If we do not shovel the snow and wear protective clothing and store up necessities for blizzards we will pay the cost. The first purpose of life is survival.

2. The second purpose of life is success. When we have our basic necessities taken care of, we start to consider our accomplishments and achievements. Erma Bombeck said: "Know the difference between success and fame. Success is Mother Teresa. Fame is Madonna."

Success is the second purpose of life. We wrestle with and struggle to become in some way successful people. I did a search on the Barnes & Noble website for books having something to do with "success" and received over 27,000 hits. Success is very important – but so is significance.

3. The third purpose of life is significance. As we move through life we eventually come to a "half-time." Unlike a football game where half-time is at a very predictable time, "half-time" in our lives can happen early or late.

New Year's Day, 1929, Georgia Tech played UCLA in the Rose Bowl. In the first half a young man named Roy recovered a fumble, lost his direction, and ran sixty-five yards toward the wrong goal line.

At halftime the UCLA players filed off the field and into the dressing room. Roy put a blanket around his shoulders, sat down in a corner, and put his face in his hands.

When it was time for the second half to begin, the Coach said that the same players that began the game would also start the second half – including Roy.

The players got up and started out for the field of play – all but Roy. Roy said, "Coach, I can't do it. I have ruined you. I have ruined myself. I can not face the crowd out there."

The Coach reached out, put his hand on Roy's shoulder, and said, "Roy, get up and go back. The game is only half over."

Maybe today you and I come in here with heads bowed in shame or frustration or anger or embarrassment. Maybe we come here today wondering if God can forgive us or use us. Maybe we are ready to just skip the rest of the game, to just wallow in trying to survive, and play with the toys of our success.

Jesus today calls us today to living lives of significance. I think that is what All Saint's Sunday is about at its heart.

It is good to remember those who have died. But they are in glory! They are in Paradise! They are before the throne of God and having the time of their lives!

The question is: What are you doing? How are you going to live the second half?

Jesus puts his arms around us today and says, "It is halftime for you. You made mistakes in the first half. I know them all, and I forgive them all. Now, what are you going to do for the rest of the time you have been given?"

Pamela Moret is an Executive Vice President for Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. She is a Christian seeking to live a faithful life in the workplace.

At a speech given at Luther Seminary, Pam identified five areas where she seeks to live her life as a Christian in the workplace.

As we remember the saints who have gone before us on this day, and seek to imitate them as followers of Christ, we put these five areas where Christians can make a difference in front of us to consider:

As we prepare to walk out of the sanctuary later this morning and live the life that Jesus is calling us to live, then let me share what Pam Moret says are the five areas where God is going to be working in your life this week:

1. The use of time.

Our model is Jesus. And a Bible story to remind us of using our time wisely today is the story of Jesus seeing Zacchaeus.

Jesus was obviously going somewhere on that day. The Bible says Jesus was passing through Jericho. He probably had a commitment in Bethany. You know what that is like: schedules, calendars...

But Jesus saw Zacchaeus and something happened. Jesus changed his plans right then and there for Zacchaeus. "Zacchaeus, tonight I must stay at your house."

You and I are going to have Zacchaeus moments this week. We are going to be going somewhere and God is going to touch our spirits and say, "Doug, you have a more important engagement." Jesus is going to work in your life that way this week. Will you listen?

2. The treatment of people.

Our model is Jesus. And a Bible story to guide us this week is when Jesus met a funeral procession one day. The one who had died was a young man, and the one who was most broken hearted was his mother.

Jesus said to the mother, "Do not weep." And he said to the young man, "I say to you, arise."

You and I are going to have moments this week where we can sit with those who are sad and lift up those who have been beaten down. Jesus is going to work in your life that way this week. Will you listen?

3. The making of decisions.

Our model is Jesus. A Bible story to point us in the right direction this week is when Jesus told of a self-satisfied man who had all that he needed, but did not have a heart of sharing.

The man said to himself: *"I'll sit back and say to myself, 'My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!"*

Roy Disney said, "It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are." Our values are not those of a world that has no god and no future. Our values are based on eternity.

You will have decision making moments this week. Jesus is going to work in your life this week in that way. Will you listen?

4. The development of my personality.

Our model is Jesus. A Bible story to direct us in growth in this area is when an officer came to Jesus. The officer asked for his servant to be healed. He did not ask for anything for himself, only for his – servant.

Jesus said he would come, but then the officer told Jesus that he did not have to come. "Just send the word, and my servant will be healed by your power."

The officer cared about his servant, and the officer cared about Jesus. When my personality has room in it for caring for others and caring for Jesus, then I have grown.

You will have moments this week when you can grow your personality to include others and your Lord. Jesus is going to work in your life this week in that way. Will you listen?

5. The showing of my faith.

Our model is Jesus. A Bible story to direct us in this area is Jesus talking about lighting a lamp. In one of the simplest stories in the whole Bible Jesus asks, "Why do you light a lamp?" The answer is: "To give light." Duhhh!

Einstein said light is the only thing in the universe that never changes. The Bible says that God is light. God never ever changes.

You can point to your hair and say, "It used to be blond and now it is brown." You can point to your waistline and say, "It used to be this big around and now it is..." You can point to your car and say, "I used to drive a Chevy and now I drive a..."

You can point to God and say, "God used to love me, and now – God still loves me." God has a plan for my life and now – God still has a plan for my life."

To show one's faith is to tell the story again and again that God does not change. You will have the chance this week to tell someone who thinks their world is ending that it is not. God still loves them.

"Christ is our life, and when he comes again, you will share in his glory." [Colossians 3:4 NCV]

As we remember our loved ones who have been promoted to heaven, we also remember who they are living with these days. They are living with Jesus.

As they live with Jesus, let us live for Jesus: in the use of our time, in our treatment of others, in the making of our decisions, in the growing of our personality, and in the sharing of the important things of life.

To God be the glory on this All Saint's Sunday. Amen.

¹ *Personal Recollections of General Ulysses S. Grant*, General John C. Smith, Grant's former neighbor in Galena, told this story.