

IT IS LATER THAN YOU THINK

Mark 13:24-37

Disraeli, a prime minister of England in the 19th Century
when Britannia ruled the seas, wrote:

“Life is too short to be little.”

I offer you a mystery.

Why do some people become little
belittled by the trivial and small things of the world
while others become big
challenged by things larger than themselves?

I believe people become small
because they think they have forever to live
while big and wiser people know, they have only today.
Big people know something little people don't...
it is later than you think.

The secret of the mystery lies in these words of Jesus:

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

Jesus did not say:

“Give us bread enough for tomorrow as well.”

God's bread is for today.

It is all that is really needed.

It should be all that is wanted.

When we want more...

when we believe, we must hoard for tomorrow
to preserve our future
it is then we turn our back on God who is the future.

When today is not enough
then we become so busy making a living for tomorrow
we never take time (today) to live
and do the things we really can do.

When we seek to have tomorrow as well as today
then our future dreams and hopes are seldom realized.
Strange isn't.

But you ask why? It deserves answer.
If you are looking for your great opportunity to come tomorrow
then you are avoiding the disturbing truth
that it may never come, tomorrow may never arrive.

The truth is—great opportunities come only to those
who make good use of the little opportunities
which come in the form of daily bread.

And what kind of people are these?
They are big people who never forget for a moment—
that nothing one has
not even one's life, belongs to oneself.

The big person knows that life has been loaned to one
by God and it can be taken away at any moment.

They know it is later than you think.

A wise man once said:

**“I hate funerals and would not attend my own
if it could be avoided.**

**But it is well for every person
to stop once in a while to think
of what sort of collection of mourners
one is training for the final event.”**

Mark Twain was overheard to say:

**“So live that even the undertaker
will weep at your funeral.”**

Well, that would take some living for I know undertakers
who by continually working with the bereaved
have distanced themselves from grief if only to do their job.

Nevertheless, Christ was the one person who did just that.

The harden Roman centurion who watched over his crucifixion
not only wept but looked up and said,
“Truly this was the Son of God.”

No person who ever lived was so conscious
of the brevity of life as Jesus.

Constantly he was reminding people
not to get steamed up over trivialities
when they did not know what, a day would bring.
Who spoke to them of a foolish farmer
who built barns to hoard today’s bread for tomorrow
when that very night God required his soul.

Why act as through you hold the world
in the hollow of your hand
when you do not ultimately own your life?

Why act as though you are the judge of all the earth
when you are only a minute’s notice
from the judgment seat itself?

Little people act in little ways
because they think they have tomorrow
while big people know life is so short
that they haven’t time to be little.

Little people are afraid when they hear the words
that were read this morning.

*“But in those days...the sun will be darkened
and the moon will not give her light;
stars will be falling from the sky
and powers of heaven will rock on their foundations.
Then people shall see the Son of Man coming
in the cloud with great power and glory.
...So when you see these things happening,
you may know that the End is near, at your very doors!” (Mark 13:24-29)*

No one wants to wake up to the brutal truth
that our future dreams and hopes may not be realized
because we sacrificed the one future God was giving us
in the daily bread of living to be shared and given away
not to be squandered or hoarded on one's own pipe dream.
Yes, it is later than you think.

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According to legend, the skylark flew higher
into the heavens than any other bird.
There beyond human sight the skylark sang songs
which were hauntingly beautiful.
One day as the skylark started its high climb into the heavens,
the bird notices a curious little man
driving a small colored wagon along the road.
Going near, the skylark saw that the wagon was filled with worms.
The worms looked deliciously tempting.

The peddler was crying his song.
“What are you singing about?” asked the skylark.
“About my worms,” said the little man.
“There are no finer worms for sale anywhere.”

The skylark thought, **“For sale are they?”**
I wonder how much they cost.
They do look good.”

He asked the price.
“One feather. One worm.”

The skylark looked at its wings.
There were hundreds of feathers on them.
One feather less would make little difference.
So the skylark reached down with its beak
pulled out one feather. It hurt a little, but not for long.
The skylark offered the feather to the peddler
and a moment later received a worm.
The worm was good, so delicious. It made the skylark happy.

Hours later the skylark couldn't even find the place where the feather was plucked.

The skylark had even forgotten which wing had given up the feather.

Besides, the heavens were still open and upward the skylark flew singing its haunting song high above the earth.

As the legend tells the tale the skylark daily traded one of its feathers for a worm.

Then the day came when the skylark found out it could no longer fly as high as it had flown.

Each worm had cost something that was not wanting to be paid in the end. But the skylark had to have a worm everyday and so each day a feather was given.

Now the pain would not go away.

Then the day came, the skylark's wings so bare it could not rise above the earth to fly. Its flying days were over.

The skylark was terribly sad. Its song stilled.

All day long the skylark thought serious and sober thoughts.

Finally, it came. The skylark went out and busied itself digging dirt.

The next morning when the peddler came by in his wagon the skylark was sitting beside the road with a great pile of worms. Worms the bird had pecked.

“Little man,” cried the skylark. **“I want my feathers back. Here are worms enough and to spare.”**

But the peddler only drove on shouting over his shoulder—

“Worms for feathers is my business, not feathers for worms.”

Even so...many people sacrifice God's given future... to get their daily worm.

To sacrifice the feathers of their promise—
dreams and hopes of true happiness—
for worms that do not satisfy.

God gave the skylark the gift of flight and song
not to see their gift for worms.

Little people are like the skylark
taking their eyes off God they believe they know best
only to end up...being grounded.

If you give up feathers for worms today
(God's gift in exchange for earthly ambition and treasure
which moth and rust do destroy)
how will you mount up with wings
to fly into God's chosen future?

Jesus put the meaning of the story of the skylark in these words.

*“For those who want to save their life will lose it,
and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.
For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world
but forfeit their life?
or what will they give in return for their life?”* (Matthew 16:25-26)

It is later than you think.

Don't be foolish like the skylark.

He never realized that the giving up of one feather
would lead to the loss of all his feathers
and with that loss he could no longer fly
and unable to fly he could no longer sing.

Don't be foolish like the skylark
to discovered it is too late to get your feathers back.

Then when it is too late you discover
that you have nothing left to live with
but oneself and one's regrets.

It then you realize you will never fly
as high as you once thought you could.
There is much that would make us feel little...
because none of it is of God.

So don't be foolish like the skylark
by putting off the day when you must dig your own worms.
Don't be like those who become little
because they refuse to believe God's future is for them
as they seek their own future.
Don't jeopardize God's future
by paying someone else to dig the worms
you should be digging up today.

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We must face the question of what we must do
to live each day "our daily bread"
so we need never be shocked by the ominous fact
that it is later than we think.

When we pray the words of Jesus:
"Give us this day our daily bread"
we are praying God will bring to pass what will not pass away.
For what God gives us everyday
is the Bread of Life...Christ Jesus.
We have God's Word on that. Jesus said as much.
*"Heaven and earth will pass away,
but my words will not pass away."* Mark 13:31)

Big people grow up into the likeness of Christ.
They stand tall because Christ stands not only with them but in them.
Each day is a gift from God
and big people are challenged to return the gift
not empty handed but full.
Life becomes for big people a gift
and like daily bread comes in simple ways...
to be shared like bread.

Here are three simply rules about daily bread.

Rules I am seeking to live by.

First, commit something to memory each single day:
something good, inspiring.

It need not be much...even four words will do.
A Bible verse is best. Then live it.

Second, look for something lovely:

Something beautiful every day—
it could be a star, a cloud, a flower.

And put a smile on it by stopping long enough
before it to say, **“Isn’t it beautiful. So am I.”**
Don’t skip a day or it won’t work.

Third, do something for somebody every day.

That’s all there is to it.

In the giving you are gifted.

Simple. Yes, but it works.

God makes it simple.

It is later than you think

if you do not live each day in gratitude
for the life you have been given
appreciating other people
and the beauty of the world you live in.

Don’t wait to give your flowers of appreciation to the dead
give them to the living.

Appreciate all you have today
and say “thank you God” as you go along each day.

If you don’t it is later than you think.

Live today!

Live each day as though it is the first day of your life
and the last day you will ever know.

