

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, September 10, 2016

It's only natural to seek out those things that can make our life more meaningful. What's intriguing is "things" are not what we should be seeking at all. In the gospel account found in John 20 (NASB), Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb where Jesus had been laid to rest on the first day of the week (Sunday) after letting Peter and John know that the tomb was empty. Upon her arrival, two angels confronted her in the tomb with the question, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Her response was simple – she was concerned that someone had taken her Lord's body. When Jesus appeared to her, she could not recognize Him. Then in verse 15, "Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.'" Mary was seeking the body of Jesus – not the resurrected Jesus.

Please observe that Jesus did not ask her "what" but "whom" she was seeking. Jesus wanted her to be seeking the risen Christ, not his dead body. Mary obviously loved Jesus and wanted his body to be properly prepared for the grave. When the body was missing, she became distraught, mourned and assumed it had been stolen. It never occurred to Mary nor the disciples that his body could be resurrected. Yes, Jesus had raised others from the dead, but how could He possibly resurrect Himself! Both the angels and Jesus asked Mary the same question, wanting to know why she was weeping. That's a question Jesus may well ask us in one way or another. For example, He may ask "Why are you so worried?" or "Why are you so sad?" or "Why are you so angry?" I take these questions to be rhetorical in that He already knows the answer to all our thoughts and actions. It's simple, we need not be worried, sad, angry or show any emotion other than delight since He is risen!

All kinds of stuff gets in the way of our happiness. We're busy looking for things rather than Jesus! It's easy to get caught up in the affairs of this world. Certainly owning a business can cause great concern as we work diligently to make it successful. These are not easy times to run a business. We can easily find ourselves in survival mode as we do our best to pay taxes, make payroll and earn enough profit to keep the doors open in an extremely competitive marketplace. Stringent government regulations and foreign trade make the task more challenging than ever before. These are difficult times to find good paying jobs and many are forced to work a second job just to make ends meet. Personal debt is at an all-time high and most governments are nearing increased debt ceilings as well.

Things may seem quite dismal as we try to comprehend divorce, suicide, cancer, bankruptcy, acts of war and many other things that surround us. I don't run across nearly as many optimists these days and I can't really blame such a negative attitude from the world. What I can expect is that as followers of Christ, we need to take a different view of life and not focus on these dismal things that happen all around us. What we need to realize is simply Whom we are really seeking! If we're seeking a better world or an easier existence, we're missing the boat. In John 16:33, Jesus told His disciples, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In this world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (NASB)

Those words spoken by Jesus to His disciples have been extremely meaningful to me over the past thirty-plus years. Like many, my family has been through our share of trials and tribulation, but through it all we've persevered since we have kept our eyes on Jesus! Perhaps you and your loved ones need to do the same. In Matthew 6:33-34, Jesus instructs us, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (NASB)

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Matthew 6:25-34; John 16:31-33; John 20:11-15

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Passages to Ponder: Matthew 6:25-34; John 16:31-33; John 20:11-15

Matthew 6:25-34 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

²⁵“For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? ²⁸And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! ³¹Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ ³²For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

John 16:31-33 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

³¹Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? ³²Behold, an hour is coming, and has *already* come, for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone; and *yet* I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. ³³These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

John 20:11-15 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹¹But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; ¹²and she **saw* two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³And they **said* to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She **said* to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and **saw* Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus **said* to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing Him to be the gardener, she **said* to Him, “Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”