

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, January 21, 2017

Have you ever had a sinking feeling? Are you prepared to sink into oblivion? Imagine being a passenger on the *RMS Titanic* that fateful mid-April day in 1912 in the North Atlantic Ocean when the ocean liner went down to its watery grave taking more than 1500 with her. The *Titanic* was touted as being unsinkable, but it was no match for the iceberg it hit that ominous early morning on April 15th. The crew was ill-prepared for such a catastrophe. Apparently there were not enough lifeboats for the 2,200 passengers and crew on board since many were held in the steerage beneath the ship's deck. These folks were mainly poor lower class immigrants on their way to America who could not afford the accommodations above deck. Few of those immigrants survived and many who were able to evacuate were probably denied access to the lifeboats, which were primarily there for the upper class passengers. Most of those who survived were women and children along with crew members who manned the lifeboats. Just imagine how it must have felt to see those lifeboats depart as you prepared to go down with the ship. Now let's bring this down to a personal level.

You see, we all will one day face the end of life as we know it. Death is inevitable. Yes, we may be able to prolong life for a while, but sooner or later we must face death head on. No matter how wealthy or poor we may be, we will all stop breathing someday and we'd be wise to consider what lies ahead. In Psalms 89:47-48 King David proclaims, *"Remember how fleeting is my life. For what futility you have created all men! What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?"* Frankly, I believe it's good to occasionally take a sobering look at life and assess why God has made us and what He wants of us for the short time we are here in these mortal bodies. Every breath is precious and so is every person. We are wonderfully made in His image (Genesis 1:26-27).

We are all part of His Master Plan. In William Shakespeare's *As you Like It*, we are presented by the Bard of Avon with the idea that *"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women simply players; They have their exits and entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts, his act being seven ages."* Frankly, I'm amused by this simple explanation of the world and its intricacies. I imagine Shakespeare carried the view of many in his day that God sits on His throne and blissfully watches everything play out before Him. My view of God is quite different in that I know He is intimately involved in every aspect of my life and those around me. And, He is not a God who plays favorites.

Certainly we'll always have classes in this world, but our God does not discriminate as the world sadly does. In His eyes, we all are special to Him in our own way. In Luke 6:20-23, Jesus informs us that those who are poor, who hunger, who weep and those who are hated and excluded because of their love of Christ will be blessed. In verses 24-26 He forewarns those who are rich, who are well-fed, who laugh and those who are applauded for their position in this world have already received their reward. There will be a day of reckoning when all will bow down to Him and confess to God. ((Romans 14:11)

We're all on that sinking ship in need of safe passage to eternal security. God has plenty of space on His lifeboat for all those who wish to join Him in Heaven. I come in contact with people every day who are unconvinced that they need Jesus to save them from the penalty of sin. All they must do is humbly accept the work of Christ on the cross and admit they need a Savior. He awaits their plea for salvation!

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Genesis 1:26-27; Isaiah 45:22-24; Luke 6:20-26; Romans 14:11; Hebrews 4:16; James 4:6-10

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Genesis 1:26-27 New International Version (NIV)

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Isaiah 45:22-24 New International Version (NIV)

²²"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.

²³By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked:

Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.

²⁴They will say of me, "In the LORD alone are deliverance and strength."

All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.

Luke 6:20-26 New International Version (NIV)

²⁰Looking at his disciples, he said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

²²Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

²³"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

²⁴"But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

²⁵Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

Romans 14:11 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹It is written:

"As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God."

Hebrews 4:16 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

James 4:6-10 New International Version (NIV)

⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

"God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.