**1 Corinthians 7:29-31** 29I also say this, brothers: The time is short. From now on, let those who have wives live as if they have none; 30those who weep, as if not weeping; those who rejoice, as if not rejoicing; those who buy, as if not possessing; 31and those who use the world, as if not getting any use out of it. For the way of life that belongs to this world is passing away.

I know, you have heard me say something like this before, something about how a text has proved to be difficult to preach on. Often, that difficulty probably lays with me. I was having troubles getting my head wrapped around the text or I was having some sort of “writers block” that just made it difficult to write a sermon and hopefully instruct you in the wonders of God’s Word. Well, today’s text, is one of the most difficult of texts to preach on. Here’s why.

In truth, the text is clear, as long as you keep the context, circumstances and the rest of Scripture in mind. And therein lies the problem. To teach what is said here, to apply it to our lives in a godly and sensible way takes a good grasp of Scripture. I think I can say I have a good grasp of Scripture and yet I would tell you that I think writing a sermon here is going to be tough. About the only way we are going to tell if I am right or not will be based on the end result of this sermon. Did I do a good job and get across the concern of the Lord in this matter? Will you walk away and say, “I understand what is being said here. I understand that we should not take the words here and stretch them too far. I understand the good and godly advice delivered by the Holy Spirt and take it to heart.” With that being said, let’s jump into the text and the things we need to know to grasp this text. Our theme will be: **Wisdom for Life.**

I realize it's a bit cheap of me to use a theme such as "Wisdom for Life." I say that because like you I am aware of the fact that God's Word contains hundreds of lessons that could fit under the heading "Wisdom for Life." Yet this theme is appropriate, for the advice given is very wise and very God pleasing. I also think the message is one of the most important of the "wisdoms" found in God's Word. God's Word is full of warnings not to let your Christianity fail and falter and that is really what is at the heart of this text.

Our text is taken from the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Paul had written to the Corinthians because since his establishing of the congregation numerous problems had arisen that threatened the well-being of the congregation. Worse than that, the problems were actually a threat to the very existence of God's saving message, so the real threat was to the souls of precious believers in Christ.

The problem's that existed were many. The problems happened because of false teachers, yet it is possible to sum those problems up. It's possible to do that because there does seem to be one idea echoed throughout this inspired letter. It's the idea that the Corinthians were way too worldly. Too worldly in the way they thought. Too worldly in the way they acted. Too worldly to the point that it affected their faith, their salvation in Christ and clearly what they believed.

As you begin to read this letter, it is clear that the problems needed dealt with. Just looking at the headings found in our Bibles can illustrate that fact. These headings basically sum up the context of what is being said. Let me just share a few of those headings and I think you will see what I mean. The second heading is: *Christ is the answer to the problems of divisions.*Yep, the congregation was divided because of the false teachers. Considerable time is spent dealing with this. In chapter 5 you find this heading: *The need for church discipline and personal sanctification.* That chapter literally begins a larger section, chapters 5-14, that deals directly with the problems and the application of God’s Word to those problems. Isn’t it interesting that this section starts by reminding the Church to uphold the truth of God’s word and by reminding God’s children that the desire to live lives pleasing to God is the direction of faith.

In truth, many of these problems were caused by the fact that false teachers lead the members into worldliness rather than godliness. Don’t get me wrong, they taught these false things “in the name of Jesus.” Such is the nature of the false teacher. In the Epistle of Jude we hear these words spoken of the false teachers: **“For certain individuals slipped in secretly, about whom it was written some time ago that they are condemned. They are ungodly people who turn the grace of our God into a license for sin and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”** Let that sink in. First, false teachers rarely come in and announce themselves: “Hey, I am a false teacher who wants to pull you from God’s Word and destroy your soul…” They come in secretly with smooth words and flattering tongues. Remember that.

Secondly, these false teachers turn the grace of God into a license to sin. That means they tell you that because of Jesus, God doesn’t care about your sin. They say that as long as you love Jesus there will be no problem. Because of Jesus, God automatically forgives and you can just keep doing what is evil because God is love. Usually the end result of these false teachings is that the whole idea and concept of sin is clearly dismissed and ignored. When you no longer hear about sin and its horror or you no longer hear that God will condemn the sinner, you might want to begin realizing that your Church has denied Jesus! Pay attention to these words. Worldliness is the false teacher’s playground.

It comes as no surprise then that in the middle of chapter 7 he echoes the message of the real underlying problem again. In chapter 7 Paul begins by answering some questions that had been posed to him in a letter the Corinthians had written. He gives the first part of his advice and then using the subject matter of this section, he attacks the underlying problem of worldliness because he recognizes it is the heart of the problem. He begins that attack with the words: **"I also say this, brothers: The time is short."**

When Paul says that the time is short, there is no doubt that he is thinking of what he mentions in verse 26: **“the** **difficult situation we face.”** Exactly what that crisis was we don't know for sure. It might have been famine or disease or already some pretty sharp persecution because of faith. What we do grasp is that the Corinthians knew exactly what he was referring to. **“The difficult situation”** and **“the time is short”** is a reminder that the world at best is a fairly unstable place and often what is going on in the world will and does have an impact on our lives, sometimes a deadly and eternal impact!.

The wider implications of these words are also to be taken to heart. Time is short. It is possible that Paul is telling them he doesn’t think the problem will be long lasting, but I think the reference is much deeper than that. Here’s what I mean. You might think that 80, 90, or 100 years is a long time. When someone reaches those ages we have a tendency to call them "old." Yet when comparing 80, 90, or even 100 years to the span that God's eternity covers then your perspective is changed. Compared to eternity the average human life could only be considered "short." This is one important perspective that Paul addresses with these words.

Our time is short. Though we may live to be a 100 years old such earthly age is nothing compared to eternity. Our time is short. Most of us won't live to be 100. Most of us won't live to be 80 according to statistics. The biggest truth is that most of us don't know when our time is going to be up, today, tomorrow, next week, or a year. Can you guarantee how long you will be here? Such are the facts of life or rather of death. Job 14:1-2, a text that is found in our funeral services reminds us of this, **"Man born of woman has a few short days, and they are full of anxiety. He blossoms like a flower, but soon withers. He recedes like a shadow and does not remain.”** Yes, our time is short. How much shorter in a time of crisis and difficulty you should surely grasp in this year of pandemic. In the USA alone, over 400,000 have lost their lives to this disease, worldwide the number is reported at well over 2,000,000. Grasp our time is short.

Paul then says, **"From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them."**

Our People's Commentary has a nice explanation of what Paul is saying. It says, *"These directions may be summarized as follows: Do not be taken up with the affairs of this life. That includes even the marriage relationship. Intimate and absorbing as it is, our marriage commitment cannot transcend our devotion to the Lord. Nor can life's sorrows and its joys, or our business and our possessions supplant our concerns for our heavenly treasure. The things of this passing world dare not displace our eternal good. We are participants in life's experiences, but we keep an inner distance from them. We do not try to get everything we can out of this life, lest we forfeit our eternal inheritance to transient gains and pleasures."*

Those words do capture the very heart of what God is saying here. We are not to let something in this life become so important that it replaces or damages our Christian soul, so that we end up “denying” the Lord Jesus Christ. We should never let our worldly life crowd out our spiritual life. My personal life philosophy is that Jesus is number one, everything else is number two! And I can tell you that I knew when Raetta and I were dating that she was the one when I told her that and her response was, “Well, yeah!”

Our catechism reminds us of this battle against worldiness. Under the 3rd. Commandment the question is asked, *"When are we guilty of despising God's Word?"* The three-fold answer says, *"We are guilty of despising God's Word if we refuse to hear it; if we let anything in the world crowd it out of our lives; if we listen to it but don't believe it or don't do what is says."* In each case note that it is the worldly idea that is warned against.

One of the greatest dangers we face is forgetting to look at things God's way instead looking at things in a worldly way. It is this very thing that caused so many problems in the Corinthian congregation. Problems such as divisions among the members, sexual immorality, falsehood put on an equal footing with the truth, m marriages falling apart, the misuse of the Lord's Supper, and even the denial of Christ's resurrection from the dead. If we just look at the difficulties that Corinth faced we can see the struggles and trials that will be found among us. Be warned, the world and its ways will destroy faith.

Worse yet, we live at a time when our faith and the very standard of God’s Word is clearly under attack. Our younger generation engages in sexual immorality and gets mad if the Church tries to correct them. People have been lead to believe that science has clearly disproven the Bible and yet that is not at all true. We get involved in drunkenness, drugs, greed, idolatries and the like and most of the time we don’t even grasp what we are doing and how our souls are being attacked and destroyed. Sadly, most of the world doesn’t even grasp that God’s Word is about our Savior Jesus. How He atones for sin and how He has sent his Holy Spirit to grant us faith and eternal life. Jesus gave his life to eternal damnation and we are going to thank him by disobeying or ignoring his Word? Shall we think faith is about works and feeling good about life, instead of about Jesus and knowing the hope of eternal life through his work and Word? That gospel truth of Jesus is everything! Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! The world thinks you a fool for thinking that way. Yet, carefully grasp that this is exactly our text’s point!

Now I think you can see why this sermon has the theme: Wisdom for Life. The statement of our People’s Bible again sums up the lesson well. *“Nor can life's sorrows and its joys, or our business and our possessions supplant our concerns for our heavenly treasure. The things of this passing world dare not displace our eternal good.”* Shall we be a people who let the world crowd God out? Shall we be a people who cling to the wonder, glory and salvation of the Gospel of our Savior Jesus?

The warning is clear. The world and its ways are foolishness. We can't afford to let the world become our god. Let's remember this lesson. Jesus is number one. Everything else must be lower than that. Your eternal life depends on Jesus and the gift of faith from him. Amen.