A Lesson On Life

Scriptures: Genesis 1:1-2:3
Matthew 6:25-34

Date: February 23, 2014

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Mt 6:24-34

The movie *Groundhog Day* has become a classic. I assume a lot of you have seen it.

In the movie, the character Phil Connors, played by Bill Murray, gets a chance to change his life and to make something good of it.

He’s given an opportunity to learn how to live.

Phil’s a weatherman.

- Miserable
- Has no joy in his life
- Life has become a chore for him
- There’s no enthusiasm, no meaning in it at all

Phil is self-centered, conceited, and pompous. He’s sarcastic and pessimistic. He doesn’t care much for people, *except* when he can manipulate and use them for his own advantage.
The television station that Phil works for sends him and his crew to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania on Groundhog Day. He’s supposed to do a traditional story on the town groundhog coming out of his hole to predict the next six weeks of weather.

But something strange happens.

Phil Conners gets caught in a time warp. For days – weeks – months when he wakes up at 6 AM it’s the same day – Groundhog Day. It’s as though God or fate is saying to Phil …

You are going to repeat this day until you get it right, until you learn how to live.

And friends, this is precisely what Jesus is talking about in the scripture we heard from Matthew, in the Sermon on the Mount.

He’s talking about learning how to live.

And in the sermon, Jesus tells us first that life is meant to be lived free of worry.

Jesus specifically says: ‘Do not worry about your life.’

My children always used to tell me, ‘Dad, you worry too much.’ And I’d say,’It’s Daddy’s job to worry.’

And it is natural for us to worry a little bit about our children’s safety and other family matters.

Statistics show that the people most likely to feel stressed are: (1) college graduates, (2) those with the highest income, and (3) persons forty to forty-nine years of age.

So two out of three of those made me a good candidate for stress when my children were at home.

I was nowhere near the highest income bracket, so that didn’t worry me at all.

The other two fit, but worry should not be the dominating force in anyone’s life.

We should not live to worry.

We don’t want to get up in the morning to worry, and then still be worrying when we go to bed at night.
It’s not healthy.

And on top of that: We spend the most time worrying about things that never happen anyway.

And worrying about something doesn’t change it a bit.

We can’t add a single day to our span of life by worrying about it.

Loads of Christians today suffer with stress, hypertension, and unnecessary worry, even though we know, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encourages us to relax and trust in God.

One of the rides I enjoyed at Opryland Theme Park before it closed some years ago was called Chaos. Chaos was an indoor roller coaster that spiraled up – and back down – through the darkness.

It was fast and scary!

When I first started riding Chaos, it made my neck hurt.

And I finally realized that when I rode it, I tensed up the muscles in my back and neck.

So I said to myself …

*Hey, you’ve ridden this thing several times before. You haven’t gotten thrown off it yet. Why don’t you just relax and enjoy the ride.*

So I learned to relax, sit back, and enjoy it.

And Chaos became my favorite ride.

Now since then, some people have been injured on roller coasters and I don’t want to make light of their injuries, but for me – sitting back and relaxing made all the difference in the world.
Through the years – I’ve noticed that some people go through life like that – all tensed up, stressed out, and worried about everything. A good relaxing exercise for us would be to read Psalm 131 whenever we begin to feel stressed or worried or anxious.

In that song the psalmist says …

I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul.

The God’s Word translation of the Bible reads: I am not involved in things too big or too difficult for me. Instead, I have kept my soul calm and quiet.

And I think this is exactly what Jesus had in mind – relaxing, and calming and quieting our soul.

So in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells us first that life is meant to be lived free of worry; and second that we should aim to live our lives to their fullest.

Some of us learn late in life how to live. Others never learn how to live at all. I wish I’d learned how to relax, enjoy life, and live life to its fullest much earlier than I did.

And even now there are times when I forget what I’ve learned.

Jesus encourages us to take time to look at the birds of the air – I love to see the geese returning in the Spring / Oh, geese! Hurry home! / Jesus says look at the birds of the air and consider the beautiful lilies of the field.

And what he means is – learn how to stop and smell life’s roses.

That’s what Phil Conners learns in *Groundhog Day*. He learns how to live life to the fullest.

• He learns how to play the piano
• He learns how to make beautiful ice sculptures
• He learns to read and appreciate French poetry
• He learns the true meaning of friendship and what it takes to really be a friend
• He learns how to be humble and listen to other people

And most important of all, Phil learns how to love other people, and he learns that the true joy of life comes in serving others:
• Fixes a flat tire on an elderly woman’s bike
• Catches a little boy who falls out of a tree
• Keeps a man from choking to death on a piece of steak
• And he does lots of other things that bring joy to folks without thinking about himself or his own needs

And when Phil learns to love and serve others unselfishly, he finds happiness, and he comes out of the time warp a changed man.

If we really want to live life to its fullest [and] find true happiness — we come follow Christ, and we follow the way he’s laid out for us in the Sermon on the Mount.

Because in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us about love, forgiveness, patience, prayer, faithfulness, service, and trust.

He teaches us a better way.

Life gives us one day at a time – that’s what we have to work with.

God gives us life in one-hour segments.

And taking care of the present is what should concern us …

• Not the mistakes we made in the past (we’ve all made them)
• Not what might happen in the future

Jesus says, Do not worry about tomorrow; today’s concerns are enough for today.

In the movie, Phil Conners asks, If you only had one day to live what would you do with it.

That’s a good question.

It’s a good philosophy and approach to life.

If you had only one day to live this is how you should live it: (1) Relax and trust the goodness of God, (2) Live life to its fullest by loving and serving others, and (3) Take one day at a time.
Amen.