Text for God is Near sermon given 101417 at Sutherlin Seventh- day Adventist Church

The material here includes context, and references that were not spoken in the sermon.

Life is sooo busy for all of us.

Seems that we get to cramming everything that we can, into our lives. And a lot of things are thrust upon us; life just does not leave us alone, does it?

We go day after day, just trying to get done what we have to do.

And some days, we're just overwhelmed

We immerse ourselves in life

We like to work with our hands

We design things and we like to make things

We feel so pushed in life

We study hard to get an education and we continue the rush

and we rely on our wisdom. We think that we have life figured out, but then we're told in Proverbs 16:25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof [are] the ways of death.

We're tempted to look for success in the things of this world.

We get married,

We get the nice things that we can buy. We accumulate alll kinds of things.

We pursue our dreams, and we follow our feelings. There's a school of thought that says that we make all our decisions based on feelings. At the last moment, it's an emotional choice.

About that statement; Do a google search for “emotions and decision making”

This was on the first page of results for that search;

http://bigthink.com/experts-corner/decisions-are-emotional-not-logical-the-neuroscience-behind-decision-making

“So at the point of decision, emotions are very important for choosing. In fact even with what we believe are logical decisions, the very point of choice is arguably always based on emotion.”

There are so many paths in life that we can take. There are really no ground rules, unless we rely on scripture. We have many things that pull us this way and that way. However we do have scripture and that just doesn't let us do everything the way that we would like, if we ascribe to that.

And scripture says,

This was my spoken error; the folowing was not “scripture”- it was quoted from the Review and Herald June 27 1899; Disease and its Causes by Ellen G. White

With many the appetite clamors for the disgusting weed, tobacco, and ale, made powerful by poisonous, health-destroying mixtures. Many do not stop even here. Their debased appetites call for stronger drink, which has a still more benumbing influence upon the brain. Thus they give themselves up to every excess, until appetite holds complete control over the reasoning faculties; and man, formed in the image of his Maker, debases himself lower than the beasts. Manhood and honor are alike sacrificed to appetite. It required time to benumb the sensibilities of the mind. It was done gradually but surely.

There are so many different paths that we can take,

as we seek after our vision of happiness, fulfillment, and success.

King Solomon was someone who had it all, and he wrote in Ecclesiastes 5:10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this [is] also vanity.

Have you ever noticed, if you've ever had a chance to acquire something, your greatest concern is keeping it?

and he also wrote in Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all [was] vanity and vexation of spirit, and [there was] no profit under the sun.

Then in Eccleiastes 1:2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all [is] vanity. 1:3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

I continue to be amazed by the paradox, that the things around us that capture our attention, that we give so much weight to, and that we put so much trust in, these things pass away;

And the things that will last forever, and the things that we cannot see, they tend to fade in and out of our consciousness.

One man who had access to whatever he might want in his day was

King David. He had it figured out. He wrote;

Psalms 119:37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; [and] quicken thou me in thy way.

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I Timothy 4:8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

She's happy, for a moment.

We think that if we just had enough time, we would be able to accomplish all that we needed to do.

But it really is God, who makes our lives efficient for good.

Christ Object Lessons chap 1

Christ did not deal in abstract theories, but in that which is essential to the development of character, that which will enlarge man's capacity for knowing God, and increase his efficiency to do good.

In Heavenly Places Ch 313

The Lord Jesus is our efficiency in all things; His Spirit is to be our inspiration; and as we place ourselves in His hands to be channels of light, our means of doing good will never be exhausted, for the resources of the power of Jesus Christ are to be at our command.

We see disturbing things happen in the world around us, things that we just hope won't happen to us.

It has been said, that nobody gets married, planning on divorce

Things happen in life

Life can take a down turn for any one of us.

Anyone is prone to misfortune. How then should we regard these situations?

Philippians 2:3 [Let] nothing [be done] through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other(s) better than themselves.

I think we've heard of riches to rags stories of unfortunate things that happen to people. We see here, an image of a man who's been beaten down by life, but the following quotation really applies to all of us.

The Youth's Instructor January 11, 1900

It is impossible for us to understand the depth of the ruin from which we have been rescued, only as we realize how deep the Son of God has reached to save us. We may estimate the love of Christ by the chain of mercy let down to lift us up. The disciple John could not find words to express the measureless love of God, and he calls us to "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." We must accept the provisions of the gospel; we must be reconciled to God through obedience to his law, and faith in Christ. Through repentance, faith, and good works, we may perfect a Christian character; and through the merits of Christ we may claim the privileges of sons and daughters of God. The principles of divine truth, received and cherished in the heart, will carry us to a height of moral excellence that we have not dreamed it possible to reach. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Every one of us is beloved by God, yet life can take a wrong turn for us.

We start out as babies, with a world of opportunity in front of us, for mother ever gave birth to a child, aspiring for her child to come to ruin.

But our environment influences each of us.

This is a description of the one with whom we must deal; Spiritual Gifts vol 1 page 152

I was shown Satan as he once was, a happy, exalted angel. Then I was shown him as he now is. He still bears a kingly form. His features are still noble, for he is an angel fallen. But the expression of his countenance is full of anxiety, care, unhappiness, malice, hate, mischief, deceit, and every evil. That brow which was once so noble, I particularly noticed. His forehead commenced from his eyes to recede. I saw that he had so long bent himself to evil that every good quality was debased, and every evil trait was developed. His eyes were cunning, sly, and showed great penetration. His frame was large, but the flesh hung loosely about his hands and face. As I beheld him, his chin was resting upon his left hand. He appeared to be in deep thought. A smile was upon his countenance, which made me tremble, it was so full of evil and satanic slyness. This smile is the one he wears just before he makes sure of his victim, and as he fastens the victim in his snare, this smile grows horrible.

We need to remember that each one of us is a sinner, and in need of a saviour.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

It was said of Christ,

“He was faint and weary; yet He did not neglect the opportunity of speaking to one woman, though she was a stranger, an alien from Israel, and living in open sin.-- The Desire of Ages, p. 194. {ChS 116.4}

The Saviour did not wait for congregations to assemble. Often He began His lessons with only a few gathered about

117

Him, but one by one the passers-by paused to listen, until a multitude heard with wonder and awe the words of God through the heaven-sent Teacher. The worker for Christ should not feel that he cannot speak with the same earnestness to a few hearers as to a large company. There may be only one to hear the message; but who can tell how far-reaching will be its influence? It seemed a small matter, even to His disciples, for the Saviour to spend His time upon a woman of Samaria. But He reasoned more earnestly and eloquently with her than with kings, councilors, or high priests. The lessons He gave to that woman have been repeated to the earth's remotest bounds.--The Desire of Ages, p. 194.

Christ has a high regard for each of us. Matthew 25:45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of the least of these, ye did [it] not to me.

From this pulpit, it was explained to us some years ago that Life is not Fair”. It was just good to hear it put into words.

In Ecclesiastes 9:11, it says the same thing; I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race [is] not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

I think, in that we are created in God's image, and God is a God of well I believe, fairness- that we expect things to be that way. But on this side of heaven that's not necessariy so, and some day we'll have our answers, and God will be vindicated.

Well, this is life in a nutshell.

I hope nobody leaves at this point of the sermon, because it's kind of a downer, but there is good to come, more encouragement.

Psalm 144:4 Man is like to vanity: his days [are] as a shadow that passeth away.

Life seems disturbingly uncertain, if all we have to rely on is ourselves, and all our trust is based on the things of this world.

I am relieved that God is bigger and more eternal than I am.

Like a child, I may go to sleep with the assurance that I will be wakened in the morning.

This is the Orion Nebula. It is hard for me to relate to the distances and magnitude of creation. It is hard for me to envision just 30 years into the future, to plant trees that I probably will not see the harvest of.

Nehemiah 9:6 Thou, [even] thou, [art] LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all [things] that [are] therein, the seas, and all that [is] therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

This is our world, and we should take better care of it. Like any talents that we are personally gifted with, we are entrusted with taking care of the earth.

Revelation 11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest it says that God will destroy them which destroy the earth.

God can do what he wants with this world. He says in Isaiah 46:9 Remember the former things of old: for I [am] God, and [there is] none else; [I am] God, and [there is] none like me,

46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times [the things] that are not [yet] done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

It's is good to know that God is in charge. This means that as we do His will, if anybody gets in our way while we are His ambassadors in this dying world, that he will have God to contend with.

We do not need to be concerned about protecting our “selves”, because God will see to it that our needs are met.

Isaiah 41:11 Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

That's something that we can relax in.

As we partake of God's love, we will

Romans 12:10 [Be] kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.

Isn't this a better way to live, being able to go forth in peace.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Isaiah 55:6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

God takes care of all His creation

Every flower, every little insect is propagated from one generation to the next. God sustains each one of them, and He takes care of us, even though we are especially high maintenance.

Isaiah 55:6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

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55:8 For my thoughts [are] not your thoughts,

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neither [are] your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

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55:9 For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth,

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so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

55:10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper [in the thing] whereto I sent it.

God will save us. He will have to, because we're not doing too well managing ourselves.

He gave Eden to our parents to take care of, and He will restore it.

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55:12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap [their] hands.

55:13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign [that] shall not be cut off.

BUT we have the sure word of God

Hebrews 13:5 [Let your] conversation [be] without covetousness; [and be] content with such things as ye have: for he hath said,

I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Behold I make all things new.

Ecclesiastes12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this [is] the whole [duty] of man.

12:14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether [it be] good, or whether [it be] evil.

It is good to know our place in the scheme of things.

There is no trying to pretend otherwise, but we are all sinners and there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

I always like to try to simplify things. The basic plan of salvation seems pretty straightforward to me.