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*"Seeing the Now for Later"*

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Sermon Text: Luke 16:1-10, I Timothy 2:1-8  
Mariner Sands Chapel

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I love this passage from Paul's letter to Timothy. Many times when I was invited to offer an invocation at a military change of command ceremony, or a public event, I would recall this passage because our leaders need prayer from all of us, on a regular basis. We do not pray just for the leaders we like, but for all leaders who exercise authority over us. Sound difficult? In the days of the Apostle Paul, the Caesar he was praying for was Nero, who was later the one to have him killed. Our intercession for our leaders is the way we unleash the power of God in their lives, with the result that we might live tranquil lives. Praying for our leaders is something the Bible says explicitly pleases God.

Toward the second part of the passage, Paul gives a larger rationale for praying for others. There is one God and one Mediator between God and Man. In the original text, the word ("man") used refers to a person without respect of their gender. That is, Christ is God's Mediator for every man and woman who ever lived. It is God's deepest desire to provide a way of salvation for everyone, once and for all time. That is what Christ did for us as the great Mediator. As we reflect on the title of the message today, "Seeing Now for Later," the Almighty God saw the human condition as lacking in one important area. Every human soul was separated from the Creator and it required something be done to make peace with God once and for all. A price had to be paid, because that is the nature of the justice of God. The passage in Timothy says that God paid a ransom price, a reconciliation was made, at the cost of Christ dying on the cross. Jesus saw the NOW: die on the cross for all human sin. Jesus knew what would occur Later: Ransom, Redeem, and Save. What Jesus did in the moment had a lasting effect for all time.

Which brings us to the passage from Luke...the story is of a manager who acted shrewdly in a panic as he was about to be fired. The fact that he was going to be fired was actually a reality check that "fired him up." Unlike today's culture, this manager lived in the household, so his firing meant staying with the family and working at a job with much less importance. He went out and made quick deals to close out accounts and make friends with his clients. He acted in the Now: because he saw what his life was going to be like later. He was decisive, he was owning his fate, he was facing tragedy at ground zero and implementing immediate changes in his future as a result. He saw the Now for Later.

How should we respond when, like a bolt out of the blue, our cherished ideals, our family, and our dreams of life which we have labored long and invested so much are suddenly threatened? Even if others cannot join you to share in your grief, your Heavenly Father is with you and will compassionately draw near to you. Keep faith in God and trust this process. Jesus cancelled your debt at the cross, and made a way for you to continue now. Resurrection power is available to you now.

What this parable drives home is the importance of our decisions. What we decide now has consequences, both intended and unintended, for tomorrow. Nothing we possess in truly "ours" but belongs to God. It's entrusted to us. Looking back at your life, you've made several strategic decisions that brought you to where you are today. There will never be enough time to figure everything out. Life is not about, "What will I do with my stuff?" It's whom will you trust for eternity?