

# **#4: Don't Waste Your Life**

## **Series: Peter's Progress**

### **John 21**

**Dr. Matt Cassidy --- July 4, 2021**

So, let's see ... a few trips ago we went to Israel and we were able to get into Bethlehem. It's kind of complicated—it's mostly political. It's a long hassle. But our guide and bus driver both said, "Hey, we can get in before it closes, the sun's going down. It'll be worth it. You can get in to the Church of the Nativity. Let's go."

So, I had been to Israel many times, but I'd never been to Bethlehem. It's just too big of a hassle. So, we got to go in there. We parked about six blocks away from the Church of the Nativity and then a storm came in out of nowhere and it was cold and raining and the wind was blowing so hard that the rain came in sideways and it would sting you. So, we had to go, at night now, uphill. The whole way it was uphill because the church is on top of a hill, and they are steep hills with cobblestones, and they were slippery. And we had to get there before it closed.

So, Ray Anderson was on the trip. He took the front, and I took up the rear to make sure everybody made it. And one of our guests with us was a small woman, maybe under ninety pounds. And the point is that she didn't weigh enough to fight the wind. And so, she and I are hiding behind walls and then we'd make a run for it. I'd put her in front of me and I would push her up these hills while the wind was coming down. It was kind of cool, because she prevented me from getting hit by the rain. But anyway, we made it to another place, and that didn't work out as well as I thought. So, I would grab her hands and I would walk backwards up these hills. Because we were going.

And we got there, and you're not going to believe it, but there wasn't much of a line. No one else was there, it being cold and wet and dark and all. And we saw the Church of the Nativity, and what was fun that when we finished, we came out and the storm had passed and the streets were wet, which meant they reflected like glass. It was beautiful. We saw a Christmas tree right there in the town square. It was awesome.

So, the point is ... there's a point here ... why did we do that? Why did we go to all that work to see that church? I'll tell you why. Because we didn't want to waste a trip to Israel. We

didn't go to Israel to be comfortable, dry, and safe. We went there to see as many sights as we possibly could, as quickly as possible. Because here's the thing: you only go on the trip once, for most people, and it's a very short trip. You only go once, and it's a very short trip. That's why we did what we did, and we'd do it again.

This is our last week where we look at our biography of Peter. We studied his epistle last semester, and we're going to look at it again this semester. But I thought that during the summer we would look at Peter's biography. And I thought, *If I were to invite him into this meeting, what would he say to us? What would he tell us?*

He's say this. That trip to Israel is a metaphor. Your life is short and you only get to live it once. Do not waste your life. It's the only life you have and it's shorter than you think.

It is possible to waste your life. It is possible to just kind of do whatever's next.

I think Confucius said this: "We have two lives, and the second one begins when we realize we only have one."

The older you get, the faster the sand goes through the hourglass. And I can see eternity from where I am right now. It goes by very quickly. And life is short, it is precious, it is final. Don't waste your life. Don't waste any season of your life.

How do you waste your life? It's easy, actually. You just putz around. You just do what's next, whatever comes next. In our culture, it's a pursuit of comfort, it's a pursuit of safety. As long as you're comfortable and safe, then, you know, stay in the boat. Actually, don't even get on the boat. *I know Jesus is out there, but He's dangerous.* You've got to stay busy, you've got to stay distracted, because if you're not, you're going to have a moment to think that life is short and precious and final.

So, keep up with the putzing. Keep busy and just do whatever is next.

But how do you NOT waste your life? How do you live a purposeful life? How do you live a life like you know how things are going and where they end up? How do you live that life? How do you not waste your life?

Well, what if we could bring the Apostle Peter into this conversation and say, "Well, how have you reflected this in your life? How are we supposed to live and what should be our motive for living that way?" Peter has done that. Peter has communicated clearly to us how we are to live our lives so that they're not wasted, and why we are to live our lives that way; what we're

supposed to do and then what motivates us, what fuels us, to keep doing it when we don't want to.

So, Peter's already said that—the what and the whys of life. Let's look first at the what. What are we supposed to do? He says in his first epistle—he says it early on because he wants us to know—this is why you exist: to make Yahweh famous. Look what he says in verse 9: “You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result”—here's what you're doing—“As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light.”

There's our what. What are we supposed to do? We're supposed to make God famous. It's what one scholar called, “Show others the goodness of God.” Make Him famous. We have this rank, this order where we're a royal priest. And being a royal priest means, one, we have a lifestyle we need to live that's like a royal priest's; and two, we have a cause, a purpose, a thing to do.

And we get this message from heaven that literally transforms human souls. And who gets to be the delivery boys and girls of that message? We do. Every believer is a minister. And every season of life that we come into—every season of life gives us a whole new opportunity to find out what it means to grow to become like Christ in all of life, to be a priest, a royal priest. That's a lifestyle, becoming like Christ in all of life. Every season gives us a new opportunity to make God famous, because we have an influence in this new season of life that we didn't have in the previous one, because things have changed. Look at this passage. We have been authorized by God—we have been called by God to show Him off. Peter is saying, *Don't waste your rank*. You're a royal priest. You've got opportunities people haven't had in the past. This is why you live deeply committed, spiritual, holy lives. Because that's what a royal priest would do. That's why you would learn to obey all that He's commanded. Later on it says that it wouldn't be burdensome to you. He says that's what priests do—make Yahweh famous.

You make Yahweh famous by explaining who He is and the things that He has done. The elemental essence of an unwasted life is this: it's choices. It's the choices we make. Every choice we make, we show the heavenlies what is the most valuable, most precious thing in our life. That's how we make Him famous. That's how we show off. Our possessions, our stuff, all these things---with our choices, we say, *This isn't the most important to me; Yahweh is. Jesus Christ and Him resurrected—that's the most important thing to me*. And so, this is being used to that

end. I can joyfully use these things as a means. Everything is a means. Don't make me choose between a friendship and Jesus, a family and following Jesus and holiness and being a priest. Because I'll choose what's most valuable, and Jesus is the most valuable. He is cherished in my soul. That's how I live a life that's not wasted.

Here's another way to put it. The reason we exist, the reason we're here right now, is to become like Christ in all of life and to make God famous. We're showing off that the highest treasure in our value system is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the God of the Bible. And that's the reason we exist.

He called us out of darkness into His wonderful light, so that we can declare His awesomeness. And we're given this title, we're given this purpose, this job. And we're supposed to have this attitude—we've talked about this before—we're on call, always looking for opportunities. We're like a police officer that's always looking for ways to help and serve. Someone's down on your block—that's your precinct, that's your ministry, you go and help them, because you're on call. That's your flock. Congratulations. You've just become the shepherd of that sheep. You're on call. That's how we live, constantly looking for opportunities to grow and become like Christ in all of life, and opportunities to make God famous. That's the “how” part that Peter talks about--how you live a life that's not wasted.

What about the “why”? Because we run on, we are energized by the “why.” Why would you continually grow and become like Christ in all of life? I've found that to be painful and mostly humiliating, becoming like Christ. Why would you try to make God famous in every opportunity that you could? I've found that to be somewhat expensive? Why do you keep doing that?

Let's ask Peter. And what's interesting about Peter is there's this passionate sense of urgency about everything he does, because he knows that this is our only trip, and it's short. This radical, passionate sense of urgency—why does Peter do what he does?

Well, we'll look at the last book in the last chapter. These are the last words of the Apostle Peter. He's telling us why he does what he does and why we should do what we do. He says this. It starts off great: “Beloved”—*I love you guys*. “Beloved, this is not the second letter that I am writing to you. In both of them” --*here's my point*—“I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.” *I'm reminding you that this is*

*what they told you about.* “... that the day of the Lord will come like a thief.” The day of the Lord is sometimes called “the last days.” It’s the return of Jesus Christ, the first part of that. It’s the final judgment, the day of the Lord. “The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”

Now, look what he says. “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved”—everything’s going to melt—“what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?”

*You mean like Christ in all of life?*

*Yeah, that’s what I meant.*

We’re “waiting for the hastening of the coming of the day of the Lord, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to His promise we are waiting for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

So, everything’s going to burn. It’s all going to melt, he’s saying. So, that’s why you are to live your life like a holy priest. You’re part of a royal priesthood. Act like a royal priest. Make Him famous, because everything that’s physical is going to no longer exist and we’re going to remake everything.

And all that matters—he keeps going on there—look what he says in verse 14: “Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for this day, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish and at peace.”

Be like Christ in all of life. Because He’s coming soon. It could happen any moment.

It goes on. In the last verse, he says that this is it. This is how it finishes. “But grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

Do you see what Peter’s saying? He’s saying... look, Peter’s here and he’s saying, *Don’t waste your precious life. It is the only life you have and it goes by really fast.* So, you should have a radical commitment to holiness, purity, spotlessness, without wrinkle, holy in that day, conforming to the image of Jesus. You should also be doing everything you can to make Christ famous. That should be your first value? And why? Because it’s coming sooner than you think. It’s coming faster, and I mean, it all burns. It all burns. The only thing that’s going to last, he

says, is works done in your life. What works? Your works of participating with the Spirit to become like Christ, to be conformed to His image, and your works to make Him famous.

Peter is saying that you're going to be home a lot sooner than you think, or He'll be returning like a thief in the night. That's the fuel you run on. You work backwards from there. That's how it all ends. That's the way it works. And so, live that way.

And if you look at Peter's life ... we've been studying the gospels about Peter's life, and what I'd like to do now is to take in these two values—how we're supposed to live so our life is not wasted, and what motivates us to live that way (because of the final judgment of God)—and I want you to see how that projects onto Peter now.

This is the way he lived his life. Acts chapter 2. It's a story called Pentecost. It's a Jewish holiday, it's the first fruits. In other words, the first fruits of salvation are the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is coming down on people. And this miracle takes place. People are to declare the wonders of God—make God famous—they were able to declare the wonders of God to people so that people could hear it in their own dialect. This miracle of being able to hear the wonders of God being proclaimed is taking place. And people don't know what's happening.

What are we to make of this? I'll just quote from the passage here, Acts chapter 2, verse 14. *What are we to make of this?* And then somebody starts making fun of these people and saying, "I think they're all drunk."

So Peter, being Peter, stands up, because of the way God made him. "And then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people aren't drunk, because it's just nine in the morning!'"

I love that. It's too early to be drunk. Later it won't. Anyway, that's his reason—it's too early.

Anyway, he says, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." And then he gives a barnburner of a sermon, just kind of going through Old Testament history and how God has worked; who He is and what He's done, from the Book of Joel. The theme of the Book of Joel is the day of the Lord. It's repeated throughout the Book of Joel more than any other book. And it's a minor prophet—the Book of Joel—because he says, "The day of the Lord is upon us"—the day of judgment. This is it. This is how we keep score. This is the day we keep score on whether or not you're living like a royal priest, and whether or not you're doing the actions of a royal priest.

And people were cut to the quick. Three thousand come to the Lord that day. Peter was basically saying, *Don't waste your lives. These are the last days. It's coming soon. Become like Christ in all of life. Make Him famous.*

Acts chapter 3, always on call, Peter and John are going to the temple like they always do, and there's a man at the steps. He's always been there. He was born lame—his legs don't work. And Peter and John are going into the temple to pray and the lame man looking at them. Their eyes meet—Okay, I need some money. How about you give me some money?

And Peter looks at him because he's on call. He understands the moment of time that he's living in, that he's a royal priest and he's always looking for opportunities to make God famous. And he says, "Look at me."

And the lame person looks at him and thinks, *Oh, this guy's going to give me some money!*

And Peter says, "Gold and silver we do not have. But we have this: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up." And they reached down and grabbed his hand, and they pick him up, and he can walk. He's healed.

It doesn't end there. He goes into the temple area and it says that he's shouting and dancing and jumping. He's doing that whole Irish dancing—I'm sure it was Irish dancing, because that's what God would like most from someone who is dead from the legs down.

And the point is that he was glorifying God because of the way God had worked in his life. Don't waste your life. You're always on call. There are so many ministry opportunities right in front of us, royal priest. We are all royal priests. We all have these opportunities to make God famous.

Here's why. He's coming back. And then there's judgment day, and it's sooner than you think. This is the only life you have.

Here's a story. It's a true one. It's in the Bible. Peter was at some big event—let's just call it a dinner party, a big dinner party. And they're having something like bacon-wrapped shrimp. For a Jewish diet, that bacon and shrimp are against the rules. But that doesn't apply anymore now that the gospel has taken place. And this guy, being raised a Jew, has just grabbed the platter of bacon-wrapped shrimp, and he's over here stuffing his mouth. And he's hanging out with his non-Jewish Christian friends. They're yukking it up and talking. And then a pack of Jewish believers walk in. And Peter looks at them, and thinks, *Uh-oh*. It's kind of like the cool

kids, I don't know, but now he's got to choose. He thinks he has to choose. So he stuffs the rest of the shrimp in his pockets and chokes it down and looks at the Jewish guys and says, "Shalom, my brothers. It's all good." And he kind of pushes away the non-Jewish Christians.

And the Apostle Paul watched the whole thing happen. And Paul, because it was so egregious, goes over and confronts Peter in front of everyone. He says, "Look, those dietary laws that belong to the nation of Israel don't apply anymore. And what you're doing right here is make these non-Jewish believers feel like second-class believers in front of these Jewish believers. And that's just heresy."

So, he calls him down in front of everybody. And poor Peter—I don't know, I might be projecting—but I think he was just trying to be liked. He was just trying to be social. I'll bet his mom when he was three years old would tell him, "Peter, the rest of your life you're going to have to struggle with this. You're going to have to trust God to not care what other people think." And this was a moment when he cared way too much.

I don't know how you're doing about failing, but this is a spectacular failure. It's in front of both sets of friends, while Paul is watching. And the duplicitous conduct is such a violation to the theology of grace that the story takes up half a chapter in an epistle. In the Bible this story is half a chapter, Peter is messing up so badly. I don't know how your last failure was, but I don't think it made it to Holy Writ and we're still reading about it. That's how bad it was.

Now, here's the part that I'm trying to bring us to. What did Peter do? In the mood of this iconic failure, what did he do? He got back up. If you do ministry, failing is the easy part. It's getting back up that's hard. There are so many people that don't get back up, for a number of reasons. Peter gets back up because he doesn't want to waste his life on the ground. He doesn't want to waste his time, his precious time, licking his wounds.

So, I'm just telling you, if you catch this idea that as a believer you're a minister, you're a royal priest, and you fall yourself thinking, I want to make God famous somewhere, you can do that either at church or outside of church, maybe at your gym or work, or getting involved in your kids' school. I'm going to tell you that you're going to fail. And that's not the issue. It's whether or not you're going to get back up. Don't waste another minute on pity. Get back up.

And the other part of Peter's experience here is becoming like Christ in all of life. You know, I'm just going to project or assume this is his bent. This seems to be—this is his bent—wanting to be liked. And do you know what happens when you have a bent? It just keeps coming



back up over and over again—wanting to be liked, or anger, or jealousy, or anxiety, or needing to be appreciated. Whatever that is, I bet an insightful parent could tell you, That was the crack, that was the bent. I could see it when you were ages two to five.

But I want to tell you something. It's not going away. It won't get straightened. That's what you leave behind. But I know when you fail in one area over and over again, there comes a time when you say, *I'm just going to stay down, and then I won't be able to fall.* And Peter would tell you, *You've got to get back up.*

You've got to get back up. You can't waste your life. You've got to become like Christ in all of life again. Just go another round at this. Become, maybe, born again, again. In this aspect of your life, that's what we're to do. Don't waste your life. Don't waste the moments in life. This is our Kairos moment. Grace, look—this is a season, a summer, to give, because we don't want to miss this, and we want to proclaim that Jesus is more valuable than our assets. We're going into a fall of service because we want to show that we would rather serve than putz around. I'd rather the Church than sleep in. I'd rather serve my brothers and sisters by taking care of their child or teaching a class, because that's the gift I have. I'd rather do that than putz. I'm not living for comfort and pleasure, a little bit of safety here. Who's got time for that? We're going to invite people, because you know what? Prayer, care, share ... that's what royal priests do. And as royal priests, we can't waste that rank. We can't just let it go. The unwasted life is showing that every decision is making Yahweh, Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, the Father who rules, the highest value in life. Don't make me choose between you and Him, because I'll choose Him. That's what it's about. It's our first love, it's our call.

Once upon a time ... boy, I just say "once upon a time" because it sounds like a fairy tale. But it's not a fairy tale. It's a true story, but it just ... "Once upon a time there was a baby boy born a Jew, which meant he was born into either slavery or death. And then his mother, in an act of faith and trusting God, manipulated and was able to do things so that this newborn was exposed to the king's daughter, that she might find him attractive. And she did. And she took that little baby home to dad, the king, and said, "Can I keep it?" Like a stray kitten—"Can I keep him, Dad?" And the Pharaoh said yes, and Moses became part of the household of Pharaoh. Boom, he made it. He was safe. He could live comfortably. He had an education equal to few times in world history. He was exposed to this private education. He had this wealth that was more than any sheik or king in the Middle East today. His comfort levels? We can't imagine that.

Safety? Yeah, yeah, yeah, under the blanket of Pharaoh, that boy, that man, was safe. All he had to do was live life, have fun, putz, until he died. Never a threat, never a concern. Just live that dream.

But Moses didn't want to waste his life. It was his only life. And it happens pretty fast. And so, he gave all that up. He showed with his choices what his highest value was. And his highest value was: I'm with Yahweh and His people. And so, he forfeited that great wealth and he squandered the authority that he could have had, and he sacrificed comfort and safety. Why? I don't have to speculate. I'll just read from the Bible.

It says, "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as a greater value than the treasures of Egypt."

He showed his values in his choices. But why? Why did he do it? Because he was looking ahead towards his reward—the last days, the day of the Lord. That day. That's what he was thinking about. He figured out how this ends and how we keep score at the end, and then work backwards from there.

So, he didn't forfeit any wealth. It says in the promises of God that he's going to get paid back that thousand a hundredfold—the wealth he squandered or forfeited. He didn't squander his authority. Jesus says that if you can be trusted with the little stuff here, He's going to trust you with a lot of stuff after that day.

It didn't cost. His decisions were an investment. And he got a really good return on that investment. Every saint, if they could come up here and grab a microphone, they'd say this: Do not waste your life. It's short. And then you live with it forever.

So, how should you live? Become like Christ in all of life. Learn to obey all that He's commanded and not be obligatory. And then, make Him famous. Show the world that He is the highest thing in your value. And if ever there's a time when you grow weary, just remember, just like that the rocks will melt and the oceans will burn, and then that day.

I'll tell you this. Let me just summarize. There's no such thing as sacrificing for Jesus. There's no such thing. It doesn't even make sense. Every act of generosity will be rewarded multiple times over. Every act of suffering will be rewarded multiple times over. I'll just say it like this. I'll just do some math out loud. You don't pay the price for obedience; you pay the

price for compromise. You pay a high price for putzing. That's expensive. Every decision has a price tag. And you don't know what the tag says until after that day, the day of the Lord. And Peter and Moses and the saints of the Bible—the promises are in there, saying that this is how they keep score. This is why the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ... this is what will matter.

And so, some little girl staying after class to straighten up before she comes out of the church is getting noticed. Some teenager getting pummeled at school for defending Christ in the classroom or in the hallway—people are taking notes in heaven. A husband caring for his wife who is slipping, and he's all by himself, but he's not, because he's acting like Christ in that season of life. Some missionaries' whole careers can be fit into a thimble ... in this life. But they're going to need a big dump truck when they get to heaven, after that day. And that's the reward they'll receive. Parent just trying to model biblical Christianity in front of their children, those who are persecuted, those who are martyred, they are not wasting their lives. Not on that day. Not on that day of judgment when all things are made right.

Jesus promises this. I'll read it. "For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory and with His angels. And He will reward every person according to what He hath done." I'm here. And on behalf of Peter and Moses and every other saint, I will say, "Do not grow weary in doing good. Don't waste your life. Be the royal priest that you've already been declared to be. Act that way. Do those deeds." Because we'll be home soon. When you see the scars in His hands, you'll be glad to have done what you did.

Paul put it like this: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us" on that day. Let's be that type of Church, Grace. Let's be that type of Church.

Lord Jesus, if we didn't have the Word of God we would not know how it ends, how to keep score, what we should do next. We would squander our lives in ignorance. And here we are. The Word's open to us. Lord, I'd ask that Your Spirit would scar these truths into our souls so that we might regularly look for opportunities to declare to angels and demons what is the most precious, the most valuable, thing in my life.

Lord, I'd ask that You would help us to see us for who You say that we are, royal priests; that we would become like the royal priests in all of life, and that we would do the royal priestly

things, even if it's a simple thing, for the glory of God. We long for that day. Come, Lord Jesus!  
We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.