

HOW MUCH ARE YOU WORTH?

Dr. George O. Wood

Today I thought I'd simply speak on the question, How much are you worth? And draw as my text Romans 5:7-8. "Very rarely will anyone die for righteous man though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners Christ died for us."

This message today is particular directed toward the seniors but it has implications I think for everyone in this room. The seniors here about 18 years of age. At the age of 18 you have lived about 6,600 days. I asked the question at the beginning of this message, How much are you worth? I might ask instead, How much have you cost?

Suppose that the parents of these seniors had been presented with an economic impact report before they were born and the parents had to file that impact report as their sign of approval for bringing that child into the world. They knew it was going to cost this much. Would we all still be here?

I figured up housing for 18 years for each of you. That means one extra bedroom and use of the rest of the house plus water, electricity, gas, and most importantly the phone. The charge is about \$5 a day. About \$33,000 for the first 18 years.

Food. Food is everything from the baby formula when you were young to lunch, dinner, snacks, candy bars and of course Big Macs and Del Taco burritos, pizza. All the food at 1981 costs - \$5 a day, \$33,000 for 18 years.

Clothes. Start out with diapers and baby days when you outgrew outfits every few weeks. Shoes, dresses, slacks, suits, shirts, sweaters, coats, swim suits for 18 years. A very modest \$3 a day, \$19,800 for 18 years.

Furniture. By this time you've gone through four sets. Nursery, early childhood (which you destroyed), adolescence and teens. Plus a stereo or television or maybe both. Plus extra wear and tear on the carpet, drapes, family room and so forth: \$9,000.

Gifts. Gifts are the gifts you've gotten and the gifts you've had to give that your parents had to give you the money in order to buy to give them. This includes birthdays and Christmases, parties, family gifts, and the like. \$500 a year - \$9000 for eighteen.

Allowances. Some of you perhaps have not gotten an allowance. Others have gotten more than I would say. But say \$1 a week from age 6-14. That would bring you in for a modest \$468. Cheapest item on the list.

Vacations, recreation, entertainment. Extra accommodations needed at the motel, the airline or bus or train tickets. The amusement parks like Disneyland and Knotts Berry Farm and Magic Mountain and ball games and carnivals and movies and plays and ice skating lessons and baseball equipment and the like: \$750 a year - \$13,500 for 18.

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Insurance. Doctors, dentists, orthodontists. At birth between \$1000-2000 for the hospital and doctor. Include regular assessment, one major hospitalization like tonsillitis or appendectomy. Tooth fillings, braces, eye glasses and the like. About \$500 a year or \$9000 for 18.

Supplies. The things that keep you going. Toothpaste, pencils, shampoo, haircuts, contributions, basketball, bubble bath, everything in that. \$50 a month - \$10,800.

Education. Public school. About \$300 a year, gasoline getting you back and forth, student fees. \$3600 for 12 years. If you went 6 years to a private school plus 6 years to a public school will bring you in at \$10,800.

Enrichment education. Good things like music lessons, or other lessons that develop some skill. \$40 a month for 10 years - \$4800.

Auto expenses. Write off the first 16 years and give you those as a gift. Anywhere you went. But since you turned 16 and have been driving, we'll count the last 2 years. 100 miles a week in the family car at 22 cents a mile for everything and it cost only \$2,288.

How much do you cost? A modest estimate for 6600 days is that without private education you cost \$148,256. For private education, 6 years \$155,456.

You cost quite a bit of money. Or another way of putting it, for every day of your life about \$23.55 – that's taking the higher figure. And that doesn't include the value of people time given to your life. All the little league coaches and Sunday school teachers and volunteers that have gone into making your life. We haven't tried to calculate that. Any parents here who want to get their money back? If we could have traded all 13 high school graduates in this year we could have built Phase 1 of our building.

As much as you cost, the next few years are going to cost even more. But Jesus reminds us that a person's life does not consist of the abundance of his or her possessions. Maybe in addition of looking at how much you're worth. How do you measure your worth and how do all of us measure our worth?

Probably in the world we measure our worth probably in about three ways. We often measure our works by our looks whether we're handsome and pretty or ugly and homely. Many a person's view of life is shaped by what they construe to be the impact of their physical appearance. Others of us wonder if God was paying attention when we were assembled.

Scripture tells us not to judge our worth by our outward appearance. It was Samuel speaking prophetically on behalf of God to David's father who said, "Don't judge a man by his face or his height for this brother of David's is not he one. I don't make decisions the way you do. Men judge by outward appearance but I look at men's thoughts and intentions."

Another way we often measure our worth is through intelligence. Are we smart? Mistaken tendency at times to gauge our worth on the basis of how much we know. It's even possible for us to be rather adapt and able in one area of our life and to be totally lacking and feel stupid in another area. I was always good at grades but very scared at personal relationships.

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Fortunately God has a far different opinion of ourselves in the area of smartness. That it's not the level of intelligence that impresses God. It is the commitment of our heart. It's not by might nor by power but by God's Spirit.

Sometimes we measure our worth by whether or not we are in a group or we have a position of power and authority. Nothing is worse than being left out. Peer pressure is strong and we often derive our sense of worth from the approval of a group. But the scripture tells us that Daniel was a person who dared to stand alone. He did not derive his worth from the opinions of a group.

There is a difference in each one of us between how much we cost and how much we're worth. Someone has written, before the atomic age chemistry professors used to say that a man's worth from a strictly chemical viewpoint was about \$32 on the on the going market. In recent years this has gone through a startling change. Scientists now calculate that if the electronic energy and the hydrogen atoms of your body could be utilized you would supply all the electrical needs of a large, highly industrialized country for nearly a week. But DuPont scientists said that the atoms of your body contain a potential energy of more than 11 million kilowatt hours per pound. The average person by this estimate is worth 85 billion dollars. Moreover the electrons in the atoms of your body are not just particles of matter. They are waves of living energy and these waves ripple out and spread themselves in patterns of light. As they move they sing. If you had the proper hearing aid you could hear a great symphonic concert as these waves play and flow merging with the waves of neighboring atoms. They not only sing, they shine. If you stand in front of an infrared television camera in a completely dark room the screen will show you from top to toe as a glistening radiating gleaming form.

In short, you're a whole lot more than meets the casual eye.

God's been saying that to us for a long, long time. When we come to communion and try to measure our worth, God is saying at communion that we're beautiful. In Christ we have his righteousness, his garment, the white linen which is the cloth of the saints. We're regarded as something special to God. Winsome. It is for us that God sent his Son. He loves the world. He loves that which he had made beautiful, created in his image.

In God's eyes we're not only beautiful but we're confident. We're able to do everything that God has called us to do. "Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world." "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." The Spirit of God that convicted us of sin and brought us into the family of God is able to empower us to do the works of God and live the life of Christ in our world. In him we're confident.

And at communion we find our true worth in Christ that we are totally accepted. "God demonstrates his love for us," Paul says, "in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." We need to do nothing else to be accepted by God and to find our true worth. God has forever established how much we cost. We cost the blood of his Son. And since the Son's blood is the only commodity, there's only one person that has ever graced the whole human race who had the blood of Emmanuel and his name is Jesus. Because he is one of a kind, his blood is beyond value. His blood shed for you and for me establishes once and for all our worth in God's eyes. We are accepted in the beloved.

May the Lord help you in the years to come to not measure your worth by your cost. But to help all of us to measure our worth by what Jesus did for us.

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Our Father, in these moments now we approach the communion table. We do remember Calvary and its cost and our worth. We pray especially today for the seniors who have marked a milestone in their lives this week. We pray, Lord, that you will direct each one of them in unique ways in the days that are ahead. Lead them into a fruitful place in you. As we all of us in this congregation today come to the communion table there may be some here today who have been whipped around and battered by adversity in life. They've really wondered what the value of their own life was. They don't seem to be doing anything really great or significant or having the impact that they thought their lives would. You cause us again today to examine our worth not on the America basis of how much you produce. But on the divine basis of what the Son of God thought we were worth. We come to you, Lord. We see accepted, beautiful, declared righteous. We take the bread and the cup with renewed thanksgiving in our heart. That through it we have found our worth. Through Christ. Amen.