

CHRIST'S DESIDERATA

The Desiderata by Max Ehrmann

Go. Placidly Amid The Noise & Haste

Remember What Peace There May Be In Silence.

As far as possible without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.

Speak your truth quietly and clearly; listen to others, even the dull & the ignorant, they too have their story. Avoid loud & aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself to others; you may become vain & bitter, for there will always be greater & lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career; however humble, it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery. But let not this blind you to what virtue there is; many persons

strive for high ideals. Everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself.

Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity & disenchantment, it is as perennial as

the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years,

gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength

of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not

distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of

fatigue & loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle-

with yourself. You are a child of the universe; no less than

the trees & stars, you have a right to be here. Whether or

not it is clear to you, the universe is unfolding as it

should. Therefore; be at peace with God, whatever you conceive

him to be. Whatever your labors & aspirations; in the noisy

confusion of life, keep peace with your soul. With all its

sham, drudgery & broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world.

Be Cheerful, Strive To Be Happy.

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Scripture:

Psalm 138

¹I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; ²I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything. ³On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.

⁴All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth. ⁵They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD. ⁶For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly; but the haughty he perceives from far away.

⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me. ⁸The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

2 Corinthians 4:13-18

¹³But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—"I believed, and so I spoke"—we also believe, and so we speak, ¹⁴because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

¹⁶So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, ¹⁸because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



How many here were children of the sixties and seventies?

I am excited about the new TV series coming up on CNN on Thursday evenings in the summer called *The Seventies!* Tom Hanks is one of the producers of the documentary series that will delve into everything from the Vietnam War to Watergate. Episodes will also cover the evolving music scene of the decade, the Iran Hostage Crisis, and the rise in terrorism at home and abroad.

I mentioned in a previous sermon that when I was in college during the late seventies I had a college roommate who had a huge poster over her bed that said in big block letters, If It Feels Good Do It! That was the Nike slogan at the time in an effort to sell shoes.

Rabbi Zevi Wineberg commented on this in a Jewish wisdom blog. He said, the popular slogan "If it Feels Good Do it!" later changed to, "Just do it." (Nike still uses that today)

The Rabbi said that the difference between the two slogans is the exact opposite! The first encourages one to ignore everyone's rules regulations and standards of conduct. "If it feels good just do it!" But he said, "Our society began to realize that it didn't make them happy to just feel good. How come!?! Nothing that is based solely on personal feelings and desires can truly make us happy!

Only when we are making an effort to fulfill God's desires for the world with goodness, kindness and love, do we find true happiness."

THE DESIDERATA

In contrast to my college roommate's poster, over my bed I had a huge poster of ... David Cassidy. (Just kidding!) My poster was *The Desiderata*.

It was very popular in that era. I had it almost memorized at that time. The word "*Desiderata*" is Latin for "desired things," meaning a way of living that is to be desired. It was written by Max Ehrmann in 1927. But the poem didn't become popular until it was published in a devotional in 1956. Reverend Frederick Kates, rector of Saint Paul's Church in Baltimore, Maryland, included *Desiderata* in a devotional he made for his congregation. Then in the late sixties Leonard Nimoy of Star Trek liked the poem so much he put it in his book titled *Spock Thoughts*.

Our passage from 2nd Corinthians, reminded me of the *Desiderata* as I was preparing this sermon.

Our Bible has many poetic passages that can be used as guides for your living as the *Desiderata* was used in the sixties and seventies. In fact, I think Erhmann probably got many of his thoughts from the Bible and it seems today's passage could be one that inspired Erhman to write the *Desiderata*.

A CHRISTIAN DESIDERATA

In Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, he explains a kind of Christian *Desiderata* or a way to live that will inspire the church community there to succeed not just in the church but also outside the church. As a reflection upon this passage, I paraphrased some of Paul's guidelines for life in a *Desiderata* style. I made bookmarks for you so you can save it if you wish and reflect upon it later.

See everything as grace. When you sense the power of God's grace then show that spirit of faith out loud. And when you express your faith, your thanksgiving to God will bring more glory to God through you. By living your life in this way, you won't live a life of sadness or negativity, a life where you lose heart, so to speak. But you will live a life of renewal, trusting that although your outer shell is aging, your inner self can be renewed by being grateful to God and by sharing God's love and hope with the world.

When you see the world this way, with a sense of grace and thanksgiving, then you know that when life's struggles and sufferings come, and they always do, you understand suffering as a moment in eternity, something that will pass. Material things are just temporary. Magnify God's love in your heart, soul, and mind; the invisible things are eternal.

The advice Paul gives to the Corinthians about not focusing on what can be seen but on the invisible things in life is meaningful counsel! The Desiderata begins with: "Go placidly amongst the noise and haste and remember what peace there may be in Silence."

LIVE LIFE PEACEFULLY

Living life peacefully and in reverence to God in the silence are the areas of focus for a new book by Barbara Mahany. It is about looking for the sacred in small things and listening in silence for God.

Author Barbara Mahany was a writer for the *Chicago Tribune* for thirty years. She is a Christian married to a Jewish husband. Last year her new book, *Slowing Time: Seeing the Sacred Outside Your Kitchen Door*, was listed as one of the Top Ten Best Religion Books.

She writes: "Month by month, season upon season, we march through time. We choose to savor every blessed morsel or let it slip away unnoticed, unrecognized, for the majesty, the miracle each moment offers.

Pay close attention, is the beckoning. Behold the holy hours."

Mahany believes the sacred is all around, within our reach, to be gathered, culled, collected, through the simple yet complex art of paying attention, of savoring the moment, of cultivating stillness.

Through her book she inspires people to pay attention to those receptors in the human vessel that bring us in communion with the holy. She says, "If we are keen to their whisper, they are the channels to the still, small voice that always stirs within awaiting, always waiting."

Her aim is to encourage prayer and to hold the holy up to the light, to extract the essence, the marrow, the deep down glory, and the everyday gospel.

I encourage you to hold up to the light the little things that often go unnoticed. Try to see each blessed morsel of each moment as a moment of grace. Look for the essence of the gospel in each thing you pay attention to. The essence of the gospel is love. So look for the love stream that flows through everything around us. See where the beauty, the song, the joy, the delight points you. Then pray and thank God for the holy moments that build up into a full day and week and month. Thank God for your breath and your heartbeat, for your ability to smile, taste, see, touch, feel, and listen to how God loves you through each of your senses.

HAITI

I was in Haiti this past week for three days. On Thursday our team took big bags of beans, rice, and enough mangoes for each child to get their own. It was the first time the children have been handed a whole mango. Typically they would just get a little piece of one if they were served with their meager meals. But that day they got freshly washed mangoes. Our team marveled at how a simple gesture of receiving a mango put such a gleam in the eyes of these children. It made us ponder how easily we take for granted the ability to have fruit whenever we desire it.

On the way back from Haiti, I sat beside a mother and child who helped me appreciate the little sufferings that can also be big blessings,

too. I offered to hold the baby while the mother filled out her customs form. When I held her little ten month old, my mind flashed back to holding my grandson, of course! But this baby had spent her first four months in the hospital and had suffered a stroke during that time. So she didn't have the use of her left arm. Still she was the calmest happiest baby I had seen in a long time and her mother clearly delighted in caring for her.

God gives us these moments to count our blessings and to see how others cope with sufferings that can become different kinds of blessings.

I encourage you to write your own Desiderata while reflecting on a passage in the Bible. Maybe when you reflect on Psalm 23 you might be inspired to paraphrase it Desiderata style. Or another good one is Philippians 4:4-9, the passage that says: Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say Rejoice. Have no anxiety about anything...etc. I would love to see what you come up with if you decide to write a paragraph or two.

Invitation to the table:

So now as we enter into our time for communion with God and with one another, let us savor the sacred in this meal.

And let us pay attention to the way God nurtures our souls through each blessed morsel and may our awareness of the sacred in our midst continue through the fellowship we have with one another after the service, too.

This is the table of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here the community of faith gathers. United in baptism, we eat of one bread and drink of one cup, we confess one name, are obedient to one Lord, and share one hope.

Come to the table where our unity in Christ becomes visible, and where the triune God gathers, protects, and cares for us, the church.

Benediction:

**A benediction prayer from Peter Marshall –
O Lord God; "Wipe the furrows from our brow; smooth the lines from our face; lift the load from our hearts, and remove the fear from our soul as we leave this blessed place in peace."**

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and forever more. Amen



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