

“Life is Cheap”

2019 CESA Values Day

“A people without religion will, in the end, find out that it has nothing to live for.” T.S.Eliot, 1939

How to use this material

CESA : **C**hristian **E**thics and **S**ocial **A**ction is a committee of the WRU, and we meet twice a year on the morning of General Committee Meetings. We look to resource our churches with materials on current issues from a Biblical and Gospel perspective.

Values Day : is usually the 1st Sunday in February (or a Sunday in the New Year), when we explore an issue of concern in our society. Most churches use this material to plan a Sunday Service and/or a Bible Study. In the past few years, we have looked at.....

2015 Sanctity of Life - Celebrating and Valuing the gift of Life

2015 Refugee Crisis - What should be our response?

2016 A Moral Revolution - Looking at how our society is ‘highly moral’ (almost Pharisaical), yet we as Christians would not recognise many of the morals e.g. Political Correctness - social media and the media judge people by.

2017 Finding rest in a restless society

2018 Mental Health and the Church

Please do get in touch if you would like copies of any of previous values days to revisit, we'd be happy to pass them on to you.

Exploring the subject of “Life is Cheap”

Please use this sheet to prepare a time of worship, teaching or discussion at your Church. There is a suggested Sermon Outline, Activities, Prayers, Poems etc.

Introduction

What do we mean by “Life is Cheap”?

Suicide rates, Knife & Gun crime, Acid attacks, Euthanasia, Abortion....

and the list could go on. Has life lost its value and sanctity? Does our society treat life like a disposable commodity, like we treat our clothes, food and belongings? Yet many others are becoming Vegetarian & Vegan placing a higher sanctity on the life of our planet and animals. I admire them for this and because I believe that God created as so I place a high value on all life, respecting, celebrating and loving it in all its forms.

So how come human life seems to have become so cheap and expendable?

I don't have a simple answer to this, but I do have three areas I would question (I'm sure there are many more).

- 1) **Violent Computer Games and Films** - This is a huge business, with many people playing for hours every day. Some of the most popular games involve running around, in increasingly realistic worlds, shooting people. Are people playing these fictitious scenarios out in real life, mimicking the violence in real life? Are those that play Racing Car Games, then driving with the same abandonment on our roads?

- 2) **Bad News Overload** - Back in the 1980's when Michael Buerk reported on the Ethiopian Famine, we were horrified by the scenes of a 'Biblical famine' being beamed into our living rooms. Bob Geldof responded with the Live Aid extravaganza in July 1985. But now scenes like this come and go on our news, and we just turn over or switch off. We find it hard to take in the constant conveyor belt of Wars, Famines, Natural Disasters, Terrorist Attacks, Gun and Knife Crime.
- 3) **Atheistic Society** - For the first time in human history, we have had the emergence of Atheistic Thought across whole societies. Enforced through Communism in the Soviet Union, China, North Korea etc. and then more recently, in the West through Humanistic thinking.

Consider the impact of removing the following concepts from our society

- a) **a Creator** robbed our lives of Value, Dignity and Sanctity.
- b) **Eternal Life and Judgment** has turned human life into a commodity to be disposable and inconvenient.
- c) **Worship of God** and replacing it with the worship of Humanity, caused us to despise those who are no longer 'Beautiful, 'Useful'.
- d) **Worship of God** and replacing it with the worship of money and resources. For instance, the drive to 'Streamline' the NHS, cutbacks on Social Care. How politicians and Banks see the 'Elderly' and retired as a financial burden.

Collins Dictionary - Phrase "Life is Cheap"

phrase [VERB inflects]

You use life is cheap or life has become cheap to refer to a situation in which nobody cares that large numbers of people are dying.

We will end up living in a society where life is cheap.

How was life valued in the past?

Victorian's view on Life and Death.....

It wasn't uncommon for families to have over five children, partly due to the high mortality rate. I believe one of my relatives in the 1800's lost three of their children in one winter.

Parents at our toddler group have said how they dislike the traditional Nursery Rhymes e.g.

- Rock-a-Bye, Baby - Down will come baby Cradle and all.
- 'Here comes a chopper to chop of your head'
- Ring a ring of roses, A pocketful of posies, a tissue a tissue, We all fall down!
- 'Mary Mary quite contrary' is a reference to Bloody Mary. The garden refers to growing cemeteries, as she filled them with Protestants. Silver bells and cockle shells were instruments of torture and the maiden was a device used to behead people.
- **"On Ikla Moor Baht 'at"** which tells the story of a walker without a hat (Baht 'at') who catches his death of cold, he's buried, worms eat him up, ducks eat the worms, and we then eat the ducks. Finishing with the line "Then us'll all ha' etten thee"

Are these songs trivialising death? Possibly, but I think it's actually a window into a bygone era and the way people came to terms with death.

Consider how people today struggle with attending funerals and want to get them over as soon as possible?

1st and 2nd World War - How life was valued....

I wasn't alive then, but it seems to me, that people were willing to lay down their lives, for the freedom and future of their Children and future generations.

50's - How life was valued....

Then in the 50's - parents wanting to build a better life/childhood for their children than they had themselves.

Today - How life seems to be valued....

Back in the 50's the country was recovering from two world wars, with rationing and poverty. So to want your children to have a better life than yourself was a healthy desire.

But now in the 21st Century, our society is materialistic, wealthy and self-centered. Can still wanting a better life for our children right or healthy? Does that actually mean, just more stuff?

Something to ponder on.....

Nigerians have a saying "Tomorrow will be the day of my blessing". A lady in our congregation told us this, explaining, right across Nigeria everyone reminds themselves of this hope when they have a rubbish day.

Anne-Marie pointed out in England we have a saying "Tomorrow never comes."

Many of their National songs celebrate their independence and have this as their refrain, for example

After the rain comes shine
everything good takes time
there is a silver lining in the sky
do not despair it will go by
as Nigeria celebrates her birthday
everyone will share in the joy of that day.

Activities you could include in a service

Celebration of life

- Celebrate the birth of a new baby - Baby Pictures. Why is the birth of a new child is so special?
- Ask people to share what makes them thankful for being alive
- What do people plan to do this week, to celebrate life? Maybe go for a walk, gardening, listen to music, share a meal with friends, enjoy the laughter of children. Who can you invite to join you?
- **Baptism, Marriage, Communion, Funeral**
What do these sacraments and celebrations
 - tell us about death?
 - tell us about life?
 - speak to us of God's love for us?
 - speak to us of our love for each other?

Sermon outline and Bible Verses

Matthew 6:19-34 v26 "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

Suggested outline

1. v19-21, v31-34 Valuing material things, devalues life.

Call it what you want “idolatry” or “materialism”, in focusing on ‘Stuff’ we stop living.

Retail Therapy isn’t living; it’s consuming without purpose, to fill a void in our soul with empty promises.

Life = Consuming ‘Stuff’?

v19-21 If “life = consuming ‘Stuff’”? Then life is disposable!

Treasures are destroyed by rust, moth, thieves or just a change in fashion.

And when they have gone what does our life have left?

In October 2018 a painting by Banksy called ‘Girl with a Balloon’ sold for £1M at auction. As soon as the hammer fell, the painting shredded itself in front of everyone. Banksy mischievously tweeted “Going, Going, Gone!”.

Will Gompertz said “Hence the talk after the event wasn’t about art but the asset. Will the shredded work be worth more, or less? Surreptitious calls were made suggesting potential buyers were already lining up to purchase it”

Banksy renamed the piece “Love in the Bin”.

Is this not an amazing mirror reflection on our disposable culture? Where even life and love themselves seem to be instantly disposable?

2. v34 Do not complain or Worry

Are we in the habit of starting a conversation by complaining? How much time do we waste by worrying?

Life is to be lived and celebrated, because it is a gift from God. If we could earn our salvation, like we earn money to buy ‘Stuff’, then we would have many things to worry about. But eternal life is a gift of Grace through the Gospel that should be celebrated not complained about.

Look at v29-30 Jesus says live your life valuing your salvation above the things of this world and therefore don’t worry!

3. v26,30 It’s God that values all life

God places a high value on the life of our planet!

V26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

but He places eternal value on our human life!

V26 Are you not much more valuable than they?

Jesus gave His life that we might have eternal life and life to the full.

Consider also these passages - Genesis 1&2, Matthew 18:1-2, 10, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, John 3:16, Exodus 1:15-22