

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2021**  
**Glynde Lutheran Church**  
**Sermon on Romans 12:1**  
**Theme: “What’s the point of it all!?”**  
**“Each day is a gift from God to be lived to His glory”**

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***Introduction:***

Do you sometimes wake up in the morning, and think to yourself, “I can’t get up this morning!?” “What’s the point of it all!?” “Why bother going on!?” I’m not talking about those times when you are too ill to get up because of a virus or a physical complaint or whatever. I’m talking about an average morning when you find it hard to get up, and wonder, “What’s the point of it all anyway!?”

I’ve got to confess that I have mornings like this.... I have mornings when I roll over instead of getting up, mornings when it is a real effort to get up, and I wonder to myself, “Why bother!?” “Why bother getting up this morning!?”

If you have times like this, or if you’re feeling a bit this way at the moment, listen to the words of Paul that I have chosen for our text for today. Paul writes in his letter to the Christians at Rome:

**So then (“Therefore”), my brothers, because of God’s great mercy to us (lit. “in view of God’s mercies”), I appeal to you: offer yourselves (lit. “your bodies”) as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer (Rom. 12:1).**

In other words, Paul is saying:

**“Each morning when you wake up, or whenever, remember what God has done for you. Remember “his mercies” to you, and particularly remember what he has done for you through Jesus.**

**Remember what God has done for you, and in gratitude to him, get up and offer yourself and all that you do as a sacrifice to God”.**

One of my favourite movies is a film that came out, shortly after World War II, a film which starred James Stewart. It’s a film entitled, *It’s a wonderful life*. Have you seen it? My wife, Jenine, tells me that one of her friends show this movie to her family every Christmas Eve....

The film stars James Stewart as George Bailey, a man who has given up his personal dreams, in order to help others in his community, and whose imminent suicide on Christmas Eve brings about the intervention of his guardian angel, Clarence, who shows George how he, George, has touched the lives of others and how different life would be for his wife Mary and his community of Bedford Falls if he had not been born.

Let me tell you a bit more about the movie:

**The movie is about a nice man who falls into a mid-life crisis. He lives in a town on the banks of a large river. It is a beautiful town, well run, clean, prosperous, full of friendly people, and it possesses a port which has many ships going in and out each day.**

**The man who is the hero of this movie falls into depression, and one autumn evening, he walks away from home, roams the streets, and finally arrives at the bridge which spans the river that the town is on. By this time, his mood is so black that he decides to end it all. He climbs the railing of the bridge, and is about to jump into the river....**

**But before he can jump, another man suddenly jumps into the river and seems to be drowning.**

**It's the angel Clarence whom God has sent in answer to George's prayers, and the prayers of his wife and children, who are really worried about him.**

**George jumps in and rescues him, and before long, they are sitting in the warm room of the lock-keeper's house, drinking hot coffee. So our hero, *the James Stewart character in the movie*, tells the man his story, and finishes it by saying: "My life makes no sense. I have never done anything of importance. My wife could have found a better husband, my children a better father. Anyone could have done in my profession what I've done".**

**And he says to the man, "I wish that I had never lived!" "Well", says the man, "if that is your problem, perhaps something can be arranged. I'm an angel of God, you know, and this is my first assignment. Perhaps I can do something".**

**The angel replies, "Rather a tough proposition, but I'll see what I can do". He then appears to contact his superiors and then says, "Yes,**

it's all arranged. You have never lived", and then he vanishes.

Well, our hero's curiosity is tickled, so he puts on his suit that has now dried by the fire, takes his leave of the lock-keeper, and walks back into town. A big surprise awaits him. It has become another town overnight!

In the harbor, all the ships are rusty, and some of them are under water. The waterfront has become a dangerous area, full of prostitutes and drunken men. The further he walks on, the more astonished he becomes. Not one house is the same as he remembers it. The whole town has become dilapidated and run down. No one seems friendly any more. In his usual pub, there are fights, and people are snarling at one another.

He goes into the public library and finds his wife, who is now a rather batty spinster. She yells with fright, when he tries to give her a hug, and she calls the police.

Our hero, the character played by James Stewart, then tries to find out what has happened. He slowly retraces the steps of his life, that now doesn't exist. He finds out that all the many unimportant small actions of his life, small actions that everyone does in his or her life thousands of times, have added up to a sum total, which means the difference between a good town and a bad town.

For example, he remembers that as a child he had saved his younger brother from drowning when they were riding sledges on the ice. Now, because our hero has not lived, he finds the grave of his brother, who died as a young child when drowned in an icy river. Now because his younger brother had grown up to be a hero in the World War Two by shooting down two kamikaze planes headed for a troop transport, the people on this troop transport have all been killed.

And so it goes on and on in the movie. Our hero realises that certain actions from his life had again and again made a difference to the town. At one stage, Clarence the angel, says to George our hero: "Strange isn't it!? Each man's life touches so many other lives. When he isn't around, he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he!"

Of course, at the end, he runs back to the bridge, where he again finds the angel. He begs the angel who is waiting for him to give him back

**his life. His request is granted, and our hero returns to his same old life, but it is no longer dull. Every moment from that time on is filled with meaning.**

Well, I suppose in many ways this film is kind of “corny”. But I like the plot of the film, and its main point. The point of this film is that your life and my life has meaning. Your life, and my life, affects those around us. Each day matters. Each day is a gift from God for us to live for Him in gratitude to Him for “his mercies” to us.

Paul says to each of us:

**“So then, my brothers, because of God’s great mercy to us (*lit. “in view of God’s mercies”*), I appeal to you: offer yourselves (*lit. “your bodies”*) as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer” (Rom. 12:1).**

Each day brings you and me new opportunities to do this afresh: to offer ourselves to God doing what He wants us to do, namely loving and caring for the people who He has placed around us.

Each day, we can offer our bodies to God in gratitude to Him for what He has done for us.

- \* **With our feet, we can walk besides those who need help**
- \* **With our arms we can embrace the lonely and the unloved**
- \* **With our hands we do all sorts of things for God ranging from big things to perhaps the more mundane things like cooking and cleaning and mowing the lawn and playing with the kids**
- \* **With our ears, we can listen to those who need someone to talk to**
- \* **With our lips, we can comfort people with the good news of God’s love, and His forgiveness *which is ours as we trust in Jesus as our Saviour.***

Imagine, too, what might happen in “heaven”, in God’s Kingdom to come, because you lived your life loving and caring for others, and sharing the good news about Jesus with family members, friends, and others.... Family and friends will come up to you, and thank you for all that you did

for them in your life.... Even strangers will tap you on the shoulder and thank you for something you did for them, or said to them, *something that you can't even remember doing.*

Your life and my life has meaning and purpose. If you or I hadn't lived, all sorts of people and all things would be different now and in the life to come....

### ***Conclusion:***

Sure, we have times when we think, "Why bother!?" or "What's the point of it all!?" or "Why get up and face the day!?" May this morning's message from God be a reminder to each one of us that our life is valuable and important and significant to Him.

May God bless each one of us as we try to serve Him *each day* that He gives us in our life, in gratitude to Him for his ongoing mercies to us.

## ***Appendix From Wiki***

### ***Introduction:***

***It's a Wonderful Life*** is a 1946 American Christmas family fantasy drama film produced and directed by Frank Capra, based on the short story and booklet *The Greatest Gift*, which Philip Van Doren Stern self-published in 1943 and is in turn loosely based on the 1843 Charles Dickens novella *A Christmas Carol*. The film stars James Stewart as George Bailey, a man who has given up his personal dreams, in order to help others in his community, and whose imminent suicide on Christmas Eve brings about the intervention of his guardian angel, Clarence Odbody (Henry Travers). Clarence shows George how he, George, has touched the lives of others and how different life would be for his wife Mary and his community of Bedford Falls if he had not been born.

### ***The Plot:***

On Christmas Eve 1945, in Bedford Falls, New York, 38-year-old George Bailey contemplates suicide. The prayers of his family and friends reach heaven, where Angel 2<sup>nd</sup> class Clarence Odbody is assigned to save George to earn his wings. Clarence is shown flashbacks of George's life. He watches 12-year-old George save his brother, Harry, from drowning; as

a result, George loses his hearing in his left ear. Later, George prevents the town druggist, Mr. Gower, who is distraught from his son's death, from accidentally poisoning a child's prescription.

In 1928, George plans a world tour before college and is reintroduced to Mary Hatch, who has always had a crush on him. The attraction becomes mutual at her high school dance. When his father suffers a stroke and dies, George postpones his travel to sort out the family business, Bailey Brothers Building and Loan, which avaricious board member Henry F. Potter, who controls most of the town's businesses, seeks to dissolve. The other board members vote to keep the Building and Loan open if George will run it. George acquiesces and works alongside his absentminded uncle, Billy, and gives his tuition to Harry, with the understanding that Harry will run the business when he graduates.

Harry returns from college married and with an excellent job offer from his father-in-law. George is dejected but doesn't stand in Harry's way and continues running the Building and Loan. Immediately following their wedding, George and Mary witness a run on the bank, and use their \$2,000 honeymoon savings to keep the Building and Loan solvent.

Under George's leadership, the company eventually establishes Bailey Park, a modern housing development to rival Potter's overpriced slums. Potter offers George \$20,000 a year to be his assistant, but, realizing that Potter's true intention is to shut down the Building and Loan, George rebuffs and rebukes him.

During World War II, George is ineligible for service because of his deaf ear. Harry becomes a Navy pilot and earns the Medal of Honour for shooting down two kamikaze planes headed for a troop transport. On Christmas Eve 1945, as the town prepares a hero's welcome for Harry, Billy goes to the bank to deposit \$8,000 of the Building and Loan's cash. Billy taunts Potter with a newspaper headline about Harry, but unintentionally wraps the envelope of cash in Potter's newspaper and hands it to Potter. Potter finds the envelope but says nothing, while Billy cannot recall how he misplaced the cash. With a bank examiner reviewing the company's records, George realizes scandal and criminal charges will follow. Fruitlessly retracing Billy's steps, George berates him and takes out his frustration on his family.

George desperately appeals to Potter for a loan, offering his life insurance policy with \$500 in equity as collateral. Based on the policy's \$15,000 nominal value, Potter says George is worth more dead than alive, and phones the police to arrest him for misappropriation of funds. George flees, gets drunk at a bar, and prays in vain for help. Suicidal, he goes to a nearby

bridge, but before he can jump, Clarence appears and leaps into the river. George dives in and rescues him and they dry off in the tollhouse.

When George wishes he had never been born, Clarence shows him a timeline in which he never existed. Bedford Falls is now Pottersville, an unsavoury town occupied by sleazy entertainment venues, crime, and amoral people. The lives George touched are vastly different. The druggist, Mr. Gower, was imprisoned for manslaughter since George was not around to prevent him from poisoning the pills. George's mother doesn't know him. She reveals that Billy was institutionalized after the Building and Loan failed. Bailey Park is a cemetery, where George discovers young Harry's grave. Since George did not save Harry, Harry was not there to save the soldiers on the transport ship. George finds that Mary is a spinster librarian. When he claims to be her husband, she screams for the police and George runs away.

Convinced by the vision Clarence presented, George races back to the bridge and begs for his life back. George finds he is back in his life as it was, but now he is full of gratitude for that life. He then rushes home. Mary and Billy arrive at the home after rallying George's supporters, who donate more than enough to cover the missing \$8,000, culminating in a massive advance an offer of \$25,000 supplied by George's wealthy industrialist friend, Sam Wainwright. Seeing this, the sheriff tears up the arrest warrant. Harry arrives and toasts George as "the richest man in town".

George receives a copy of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* as a gift from Clarence, with a note reminding George that no man is a failure who has friends, and thanking him for his wings. At that moment, a bell on the Christmas tree rings. George's youngest daughter Zuzu explains that it means that an angel has earned his wings, signifying Clarence's promotion.