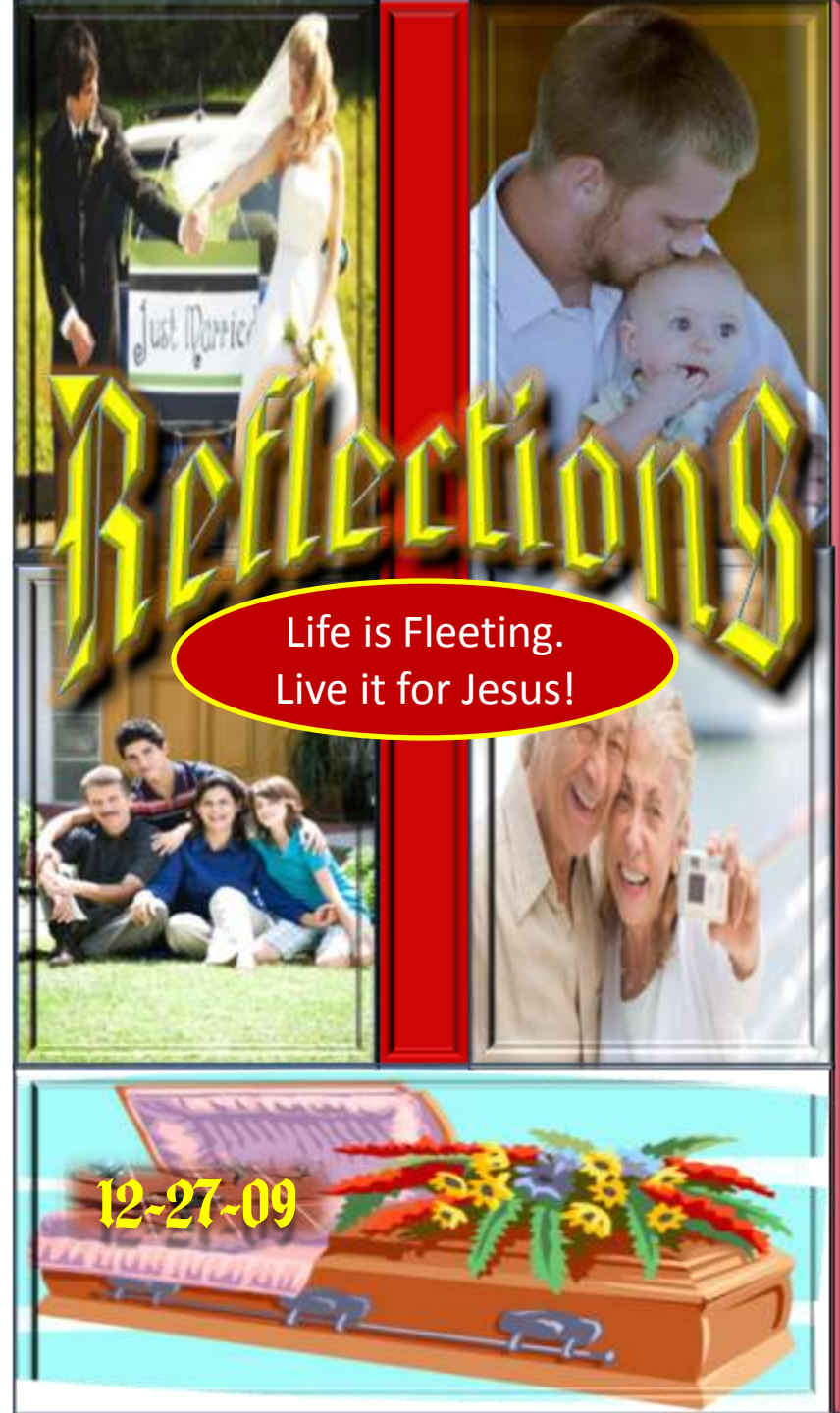


Sermon Notes



12-27-09



Reflections

This past year has been one of those years that reminds us that we are not on this planet forever. We are given our relatively short lives to live for the Lord's glory, and having been born into a creation still under the curse of sin, we need a savior to give us hope and to secure our restored relationship with God. In this past year of 2009, we have seen new babies being born, children becoming teens, high school grads becoming collegians, joining the military, or beginning their careers, and sadly, we have also said our final goodbyes to those who have moved into eternity. We have shared the joy of weddings and the grief of lost loved ones. It has been a momentous year.

Our fellowship has shared in the pain of sickness, surgery, and loss of loved ones and yet we have emerged stronger in our faith, rejoicing in the hope of our salvation, and eagerly looking forward to the new year that will shortly be opening before us.

Solomon reflects on the seasons of life in the book of Ecclesiastes. *To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:* ² *A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted;* ³ *A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up;* ⁴ *A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance;* ⁵ *A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;* ⁶ *A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away;* ⁷ *A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;* ⁸ *A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace.* (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 NKJ)

James also reminds us that life is a limited and fleeting time given to us in which we are to be faithful in acknowledging that it is a gift from God and that our choices of what to do, where to go, and what to accomplish must grow out of that understanding. He states it thus: *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit";* ¹⁴ *whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears*

for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ *Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."* ¹⁶ *But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.* (James 4:13-16 NKJ) He also exhorts us to understand that... *For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.* (James 4:14 NKJ)

To live our life without Christ is to live it in vain. It has been made very clear in Scripture that we all must face death and the judgement to follow. *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,* ²⁸ *so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.* (Hebrews 9:27-28 NKJ) In this declaration we see three important realities. First, we will all die, second, we will all face God's judgement, and finally, Jesus has provided himself as the fulfilled requirement of death for sin. In Him we can face death and eternity with confidence in His provision for our eternal salvation.

Looking forward to the year 2010, can, and should, be done with great expectations. In spite of the politics of this era of history, in spite of past defeats, in spite of any of this year's negative events, we can look forward, in the hope of our salvation, to witness the power of God expressed in our lives and in our church family.

Jesus has said that He would never leave or forsake us, and as a result we can rest assured of His care for us. In 2010 let's practice the principle that Peter gives us in his first epistle. *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,* ⁷ *casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.* (1Peter 5:6-7 NKJ) Let's trust His promise, look for His hand of care in times of trouble, be diligent to praise Him with our thanksgiving and learn to walk in His Word as His obedient children. We've experienced the cycles and seasons of life this past year as we ourselves, and as our friends and loved ones, have gone through the many and varied trials, successes, and opportunities that life has given. Life is short, let's be certain that we have lived it fully in relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In the new year 2010, let's purpose to be about our Father's business. Let's share His love as we grow in grace and in His Word. Anything less is living in vain. **Pastor Doug**