

ONE THING

GUEST SPEAKER

Philippians 3:12 // Shannon Popp

December 31, 2017

SHANNON: Wow, yeah, God has done some amazing things through Mission Hills this year. This is a great time to look back and reflect and rest on what God has done. My name is Shannon Popp, and I am one of the student pastors here at Mission Hills. I'm the high school pastor at the Littleton Campus here. And it's my privilege to open God's Word with you this morning. So thankful for Lucas and the student worship team. It's tough to get up in front of their peers, but it's tough to get up in front of the entire congregation. They sounded great this morning, so good.

This is the time of year where we start to look back and we start to look at what God has done in our lives individually also as a community, as a church. But this is the time of year that we kind of look back and we start to look forward because of 2017 and start to look into 2018, at what that's going to look like. And it's when we start to do New Year's resolutions. I don't really like New Year's resolutions. My household, my family doesn't really do it. As a matter of fact, Ginger [SP], started working out in December, my wife, just so it wouldn't be a New Year's resolution. So it was not something that she could like pass or fail at, right? And I think that's because of the weight of New Year's resolutions.

I think that because we're looking back at last year and trying to figure out what went wrong, where we failed, or what we messed up, and then we start to look forward into 2018 and say, "You know, I'm gonna work out. I'm gonna read my Bible. I'm gonna do this or not do that." And the weight of that and carrying that for an entire year is really difficult. And so probably what we should do more often is just look at our day and look at our day and see if we've passed or failed or gotten better at it. And I think there's a big difference between looking at our day and saying yes, yes, I won or I lost today or I got better today. And what I mean by that is that I think sometimes, we start to live like we're finite creature instead of infinite beings.

Anybody in here play video games? Yeah, I see there are a lot of kids in here this morning. I see a lot of hands going up. Anybody grow up playing the flip-top Nintendo, anybody? Okay, I see hands going up now, yep. All right, what about Atari, anybody willing to put...I saw a lot more hands go up actually, a lot more this service than last service. That's great. Well, video games used to be very finite. They would go from left to right and there would be a beginning and an end, and that you would either win or you would lose. Video games have kind of evolved over time and have really become infinite. It's not about winning or losing. It's just about continuing this journey that you're on. And you can go anywhere, you could do anything in these games.

And that's what I wanna talk about this morning, is that there is a big difference between looking at our life and saying, "Did I win or did I lose or am I getting better." Now, I think it's very important that we talk about how we go about doing that and how we get better. And so to do that, I want us to grab our Bibles and turn to Philippians. And we're gonna be in Philippians 3 and we're gonna start in verse 12. So if you have a Bible, grab your Bible. If you don't, there's Bibles in the seat back in front of you. Grab your device or it will be on your screen.

The author of this book is a man named Paul, and he was named Saul. And he was a very religious person up until his transformation and when his name was changed. But the thing is, is that he was going around and he was doing things that he thought was right in the name of God for his religion, but he was really a thug. I mean, he was a gangster and maybe even a murderer and was probably there when Stephen was stoned. But he was going around and grabbing Christians and pulling them out of their houses and putting them into the street and beating them for their faith.

And then one day, on his way to Damascus, he had an encounter with Jesus Christ himself. He came face-to-face with Him and it changed everything in his life from that point forward, and his life was very different. He went around planting churches and



writing letters. He wrote this letter that we're going to read a portion of this morning to the Philippians. And what you need to know about the Philippians is that they were very prideful about being Philippians. They were citizens of Philippi and they took a great pride in that. You're gonna see that come out here a little bit later, but we're gonna start in Philippians 3:12. I'm gonna read a few verses here.

Paul says, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Will you pray with me? Father God, we thank You so much for 2017, for this year, what You've done in our lives, what You've done around us and in our circumstances. Father, we celebrate the good times and the hard times, the fun times, the bad. We celebrate that because we know that You're in control of all things and that it's through the trials and the hardships that You're continuing to guide us and lead us. Father, today specifically is a day that we stop and rest and start to project forward into 2018 and what that's going to look like. So, Father, over the next few minutes, as we unpack Your Word, help us to focus on You. Help us to focus on our relationship that we have with You and let that drive us into the New Year, and that it's not our own ideas, our own way, but that we follow Your will, in Jesus's name, Amen.

A couple weeks ago, I was at the gym and specifically, I was in the locker room at the gym, which is maybe a strange transition to go straight from God's Word to pray to the locker room at the gym. The story that I'm gonna tell you was transformational in my own life. And I don't know what it is about the gym, specifically the one that I go to, why the guys in the locker room are so possessive over the public lockers. But apparently, I don't know this, but apparently, other people have lockers that they use. And I don't know what it is. But when I go there, I don't know what the cosmic powers in the universe is, but if there's only two people, two of us in the locker room, we definitely have our lockers right next to each other.

And so I finished up and I came to the locker room, nobody in there, one person in there and, of course, he is sitting right in front of my locker. Well, I'm not in a big hurry and so it's fine. I decided that I'm going to be patient and give him some time. And so I start to wait, but I start to realize that he's got like an earbud in and he's kind of scrolling on his telephone. And so he's not getting ready or getting dressed or anything. And so I start to walk over there, and that's like within two feet of him. He starts waving and he's like, "What are you doing?" And he's waving his arms around and there's like a crowd now around watching this happen, and people are like laughing and saying what's going on. And he says something to me, which was transformational in my life and probably spurred on this message. But this is what he said. He said, "It's really hard to do two things at one time." And it is. It's really tough to do that. We weren't made to do two things at one time. And apparently that meant for him sitting and being on his phone.

But what Paul is saying here is that there really is one thing. I think a lot of times, as believers, people who follow Jesus, we make it about a lot of things. But Paul is telling the Philippians and really sharing with us that it's about one thing. Now, he's talking to a group of believers. The Philippians follow Jesus and so he's not saying that the one thing is salvation, because what he's saying is that we have a role in this one thing. And we know that we don't have a part in us being saved and coming into a relationship with God, is that Jesus finished that on the cross and now because of what He did and what He finished, I can have a relationship through faith, through Jesus Christ, in God and have a relationship with Him. But the interesting thing is he's not saying that there are seven things. He's not saying there are a bunch of things that we need to do. He says that there is one thing, as believers, that we let go of the past and press forward into the future. And what he's talking about is priorities and priority really.

That word "priority" is interesting. It started in the 14th century, is where that word originated. And when it was originated in the 14th century, it really was singular and not plural. There were no such thing as priorities. It was just priority. But what we do,



what we do in America and we Americanized it, we made it bigger and better, and so we have a priority list of things that we do. And that's how we get things done.

But what Paul is saying is that it's about one thing that we do as believers and that we need to know what the one thing is. And this can feel like a restraint on us, that it's just one thing. That seems really simple to just do one thing. But you have to realize that we were made to just do one thing at a time. We had a staff Christmas party, and we had an illusionist there, a magician. And the way that they do that is they get your attention over here so that they can do the magic somewhere else, because we weren't made to be able to focus on two things at one time.

And so this can seem like a restraint, but it's really God's goodness and gift to us that He puts restraints in our lives. He puts a restraint on our time, on our wealth, on our power, on our authority. We have a lot of restraints in our life, and those are good things. And so what he's saying here, in this passage, is that you can do anything that you want. You just can't do it at the same time, is that you can do anything, but you can't do everything. And we have options here in our culture, especially here in this area. But Paul is saying that there's really one thing. And honestly, a few verses before this, he talks about that he was doing a lot of things, but they were the wrong things.

If you look at verse 7, Paul says, "But whatever were gains to me, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ." Paul did a lot of great things in his life. Actually, he was a Hebrew of Hebrews, and he lists out seven things that he was doing before his transformation with Jesus. And it's not a coincidence that he lists seven things, because in the Old Testament, seven was the number of perfection. And so he's saying, "Not only did I do great things, I did them better than everyone else."

But what he's telling us is if we make the wrong choice and the one thing that we focus on is the wrong thing, that it's garbage. It's rubbish. And what he says is that his entire life up to the point of him meeting Jesus was garbage and only worth throwing in the trash. And it's verse 10 is where he tells us what the one thing is.

Verse 10 says, "I want to know Christ, yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings, becoming like Him in his death and so somehow attaining to the resurrection from the dead." So he tells us here, the one thing is knowing Jesus. The one thing is knowing Him intimately, but it's not religion. And I think that there's a form of religion that we can fall into that twist God's goodness.

This phone that I have has an apple with a bite out of it. And the lie that I was told is that this would connect me. In reality, it creates isolation in our lives. And that connection is face-to-face and that we can communicate a lot of different ways. And when we're talking about a relationship and not religion, we're talking about knowing a person, knowing somebody, knowing Jesus Christ more and more each day. So what does it mean to know Jesus? What does it mean to be in a relationship with God? What does it mean to be righteous?

And I think that if we're not careful, we just go ahead and make a list of what it looks like to be in a relationship with Jesus. There's a lot of things that we do and that we read our Bible and that we pray and that we fast. Now, we never say that we fast now because it's the holidays. Maybe January 2nd when all the ball games are over, we can start fasting. But we make lists of things that we do, and more, we make list of things that we don't do as believers. We don't say certain things. We don't go certain places. We don't watch certain movies. We don't listen to the types of music. And if we're not careful, then we end up making lists.

And I think one of two things really ends up happening. Either, you make your list and then by January 15th, you're like, "Well, that just failed and so I'm scrapping the list. We don't need a list of things that I need to do." Or you're a really disciplined person and you're able to keep the list and then you end up judging other people. And that's not what Paul is talking about here.



He's not talking about a list. He's talking about a relationship. He's telling us that our identity has been changed.

My identity has been changed. I was single for 31 years of my life. I didn't get married until I was 31. And then I got married and immediately, my identity changed. I became a husband. And I could sit down and I could make a list of what a good husband does, that a good husband takes out the trash. He picks up after himself. He puts fuel in the car. And if a large animal comes out of the wood to attack my wife, it's my job to protect her, right, guys? We know that, right? That's not maybe on your list but you know that to be true, right? But that's not what he's talking about of making a list, because that's not what happened.

I did have my wedding day, a beautiful day that it was, and then the wedding ceremony. And then after the ceremony's over and I kissed my bride for the first time, we didn't go to Starbucks, sit down and make a list. No, we went on our honeymoon. And we go on dates together. We go to the movies. We go to dinner. We sit across from each other. We sit face to face so that I can listen to what she's saying and so that we can connect. You know, I take the trash out because I don't want my girl to take the trash out. I put fuel in the car because I don't want my wife to have to do that. I do those things not because I'm bound to a set of rules, but because I'm in love with a person.

And that's what Paul is talking about. What he's saying here is that what we need to do is fall more in love with Jesus today than we were yesterday and more in love with Him tomorrow than we are today, and that we let go of the past and that we press on to the one thing. And so how do we do this?

Verse 15, he says, "All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you." I love this verse. It's hilarious. It says if you're mature, you know this already. You understand this. You get this. And if you don't agree with this, then just wait. God will make it clear to you as well. He goes on in verse 16, "Only let us live up to what we have already attained."

And the reality is...I mean, for mature believers, we don't need to know more facts about Jesus. We don't need to know more about who He is and what He did to follow Him. To be in a long great relationship with our God, the Creator of the universe, we don't need to know more facts, but we do need to be reminded. And we need to be reminded that it's not about the priority list. There's nothing wrong with the priority list, but how are you getting to the priority list.

He goes on in verse 17, "Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do." And really what he's saying is that there are living examples around you. If you're wondering what it looks like to keep the one thing the one thing, to keep focused on Jesus, to let go of the past, there are probably people around you, even right now, who are living this out and you understand this and to follow them.

Just this last Friday at Starbucks, I ran into a friend, and he was talking about that he was going through this change in life and that he was going on into a new adventure. And he didn't know what it was gonna look like, and he's got some kids that are in high school. So he called up a friend who went through this just a few years ago and made this transition. And he just asked him, "You know, what are the things that I need to watch out for and what are the things that I need to make sure that I do? What are the things that I shouldn't do?" He said, "We should set up a phone call that we can talk with each other every couple of months just as I make this transition."

And there are people around us that can show us what that looks like. And it's important who we choose to follow as they're following Christ. But he does give a warning. In verse 18, "For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is their destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things." What he's talking about here is that there's a difference between the spiritual and the earthly. There's a difference between heavenly and the physical. And he's telling us that we need to be careful because there are people who are walking around, who look good, who do the right things, who read the Bible, go to church, but on the inside are not living from a place of where their identity is at.



I had a friend a few years ago before I got married, and he was wanting a girlfriend at the time, but he wasn't wanting to go to a bar or go anywhere that people would normally go to meet people. And he realized that we had a dog park across the street from our place that we were living at. And he realized that there were some attractive young ladies going there with dogs, so he decided that he needed a dog. We told him, "Don't get a dog because, first of all, I don't wanna take care of your dog. But don't get a dog. This is never going to work." And so he didn't listen to us and he went and got a beautiful something that looked like a dog. Now, I'm not sure what this was. It was like part wolf, part dog. I don't even know if that's legal, but he had this dog that had this intense desire to grab hold of things.

And he took this dog to the dog park. And on the very first throw, he throws the ball over. It goes bouncing. It bounces into the bushes, and he's kind of looking around at the scenery and what might be as the dog goes bounding off into the bushes. The problem is is that the dog didn't come back with the ball. It came back with a bunny in his mouth. And so he, you know, had to do what us guys have to do at that point and put down the bunny and, you know, there were people there, attractive people from the opposite sex watching this and so that was it. He never went back to the dog park after that, got rid of the dog.

But the reality is there are things in our life that seem really great on the outside, but we have to be careful what's going on. And we have to be careful in our own lives, what's happening and that we're just not checking the list or checking the boxing, saying, "Yes, I'm doing all the right things as a believer." And we need to be careful with the people that we're hanging out with and that we're involved with in life and that we're living life together with, and make sure that they're living from the right place. And that's what Paul goes into here.

In verse 20, he says, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body." Did you catch that? He said He will be the one that transforms us. He is the one that is doing the work. And what he's saying here is that it's more important who we are than what we do. And don't get me wrong. It's important what we do, but it needs to be coming from a place of who we are. And who we are comes from who's we are, and that our identity needs to fuel our activity, and that the things that we do in our life, the list that we make, the to-do list, the New Year's resolutions when we are resolving our lives, comes from a place of identity and who we are, which comes from who's we are, because Jesus is the one that did all of the work. Anything that you think that you might need to do to get into God's good graces, He did on the cross. Any punishment you think that you deserve from the things that you've done in your life, He buried in the grave and He left it there.

I, in my life, am not pressing into Jesus hoping that one day I'll be His, I'm pressing in to Him because I am His. I'm not pressing into the relationship with my wife hoping that one day that I'll be hers. I am hers. She is mine. I don't read the Bible because I have to. It's because I want to. I pray because there's a desire there. I organize my mornings around Jesus and the things of God because that's what I want to do and there's a desire there. And I understand that sometimes, we need to set up a discipline to be able to get our heart in the right place, and that discipline should turn into delight and then turn into a desire. And it's that desire that drives us further and further into our relationship with Jesus. The one thing that we do is we press forward. We let go of the past. And it's just one thing that we do because there's a difference between living our life as a finite creature or an infinite being.

Walmart is a finite store. They have store locations and certain things that they sell in Walmart. You can't get everything that you want at Walmart. Now, Amazon is infinite. Amazon, you can get whatever you want whenever you want and you can get it delivered to wherever you want when you want it to get there. Some of us experience that this Christmas, that we were able to do our shopping online at Amazon because it's infinite, because there's a difference between winning and losing the day or getting better each and every day. And the goal is not to see if we won or if we lost, if we passed or if we failed, if we kept our resolution or not. The goal is to get better each and every day. But how we do that matters because the reality is, is that we can take things into our own hands. And what we need to stop doing is putting Jesus at the top of our priority list and make Him the center of our heart, because the reason for a list is to check it off. We don't check that off.



What I mean by that is I think that in our mentality, if we think that if we give God the first part of our day, the first part of our week, and 10% of our money, then we're doing good. But if we think like that, then the reality is, is that somehow we can think that the other 90% is ours. And what I mean by that is that we all have been given so much in this life. And we come into a place like this and we wanna get filled up. We want the Spirit of God to be vibrant in our life and so we come here looking for God, looking for God to speak to us, looking for Him to bring peace into our heart when circumstances around us are out of control and we don't understand.

But the problem is is that we leave here and we go into our lives, and there's different areas of our lives that need to be filled up. We have family, work, hobbies, friends, and we all have families. Some of us are living in our parents' home, our grandparent's home. Some of us have kids of our own, but that takes time and it takes energy. And depending on how much you like your family is how much you give them, right? Maybe you like them a little bit more, so you give a little bit more. We have jobs. All of us work a lot. It takes up a lot of our time, a lot of our energy. We feel like we're continuing to give out and to pour out of our lives. And we feel like what's going on is as we are pouring out, our heart is being emptied. And we could have tons of cups up here representing all the things that we have to get done, because we all have things that need to be done in our lives, at home, at work, with our friends. But the reality is is this mentality is wrong.

And what Paul is telling us here is that the way to do this is to take everything in our life and to stack it up and to live in Him. The priority list is not wrong. The to-do list is not wrong. It's how we think about it because really, Jesus is the list. He's called us into a relationship so that we can do work with Him and for Him. The problem is in my life is that I end up doing work and then asking Him to bless it later and say, "God, this is where I'm going. This is what I'm doing. Make sure that You bless this."

And what we're saying and what Paul's saying here is that it's not just the big things in life. And I think that we seek Him when we're changing jobs or when our kids are going to college or when big things happen in our life. But what Paul is saying, the one thing, this relationship with Jesus Christ means that you take every thought that you have and you filter it through the throne room of God. So every drive that you make, whether you're driving to the office, driving home, driving to the grocery store, driving to you pick up the kids, drop the kids off, every step that you take, whether you're in your home or in your office, everything that we do is in Christ Jesus. And there's nothing that we do that's outside of that.

So we need to stop living as finite creatures and remember that we're infinite beings and filter all of our lives, all that we are, and all that we have through the throne room of grace. We let go of our past. We press on to the future so that we can live in the present with Jesus. Will you pray with me?

Father God, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You that You simplify it for us. Father, we thank You that You have given us full lives, life to the fullest, that there are many, many things that need to get done. Father, help us to remember, as we move into 2018, that it's not that we're necessarily saying no to bad things, but that we're saying no to good things for the best things and that we're doing it with You and not on our own. Help us to focus on You as we put together our to-do lists, our New Year's resolution, and as we step into 2018, and not do this on our own, but by the power of Your Spirit, in Jesus's name, Amen.

