

**New St. James Presbyterian Church, London, Ontario**  
**Reformation Sunday, October 28, 2018**  
**Rev. Dr. David Thompson**

**Fantasy or Living the Life You Have?**

“And the things you prepared, whose will they be? So, it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.” St. Luke 12: 20-21

Mary’s husband Bill was a rather selfish man who indulged himself in fantasies. Near the end of his life he fantasized about how he would like to be remembered.

**But sometimes reality has a way of stepping into our fantasies and things don’t go exactly the way we planned.**

Bill finally died. It was not until sometime after the death that Mary chose to speak about what a thoughtful and wonderful man her late husband Bill had been. This surprised her friends greatly because Bill had always thought only of himself.

"Bill thought of everything," she told some friends. "Just before he died, Bill called me to his bedside and handed me 3 envelopes."

"Mary" he told me, "I have put all my last wishes in these 3 envelopes. After I am gone, open them in sequence and do exactly as I have written. Only then can I rest in peace."

"What was in the 1st envelope?" her friends asked.

"It contained \$15,000 with a note, ‘Please use this money to buy me the best coffin.’. So, I bought a beautiful mahogany engraved coffin for him."

"The 2nd envelope contained \$20,000 with a note, ‘Please use this for a very large funeral’. I made Bill a very wonderful and expensive funeral and reception with all his friends invited with a free bar."

"And the 3rd envelope?" asked her friends.

"The 3rd envelope contained \$50,000 with a note, ‘Please use this to buy the perfect stone to remember me by. So, I did."

"So," said Mary, holding up her hand and pointing to a five carot diamond. You like the stone?"

Have you ever had a romantic fantasy about someone and found to your sadness that the sentiments were not returned? And did it hit you hard?

Have you ever been really hurt by someone and worked out a fantasy revenge? You don’t do it, but you sure thought about it!

Have you ever entertained a sexual fantasy and no matter what your friends have said to you, you pursue a dangerous course of action that could spark a ‘me to’ campaign against you?

Or perhaps for you, you lost a husband or wife, or child or grandchild and it has made you very sad and you wonder whether life is still worth living?

The United Nations has flagged that there is a dangerous trend across the world at present. If you don't like someone, if you have absolute power you can 'disappear them' as China has done with the former head of Interpol. Or you can poison someone like Sergei Skripal with Novichuk.

Or you can commission a death squad to carry out an extrajudicial State killing of a journalist like Jamal Khashoggi.

These sorts of things are not new for students of the Bible.

King David in the First Testament of the Christian Bible has absolute power. He sees a beautiful woman and has a sexual fantasy that he wants to fulfill. He finds out that she is married and that she is the daughter of Eliam. He sleeps with her anyway and she gets pregnant. Then David tries unsuccessfully to get her husband Uriah home with her to cover the pregnancy with an explanation. Uriah refuses to leave the battle and so David plans his murder and eventually takes Bathsheba to be his wife.

Ahithophel, through most of his life, was David's trusted wise advisor. But Ahithophel suddenly deserts David and becomes part of David's son Absalom's, insurrection. He counsels Absalom to sleep with King David's concubines in public which would be very upsetting to David. Absalom does.

So, what has happened to Ahithophel? Why did Ahithophel leave David?

Scholars think that Bathsheba was Ahithophel's son Eliam's daughter. In other words, Bathsheba was Ahithophel's **granddaughter**. It looks like that Ahithophel then had a dark fantasy. **Get revenge on David his former friend...**

Hence the counsel to sleep in public with David's concubines. Then came his counsel to Absalom to fall upon David when David was exhausted from battle.

But Ahithophel's counsel is overcome and not followed and so his revenge fantasy is not fulfilled. Now he has alienated both David and Absalom and so he goes home and takes his own life.

In the New Testament Jesus tells us a story about a rich man who wanted to build more barns. His fantasy was that after he had built his bigger barns, why then he could eat drink and be merry and relax into wealth and abundance. It is likely that another parable about the rich man and Lazarus at his gate applies. The great commandment to love one's neighbor as the self was violated here.

The man is greedy. Did he walk by a Lazarus who begged at his gate and did the rich man give him nothing, while he was to build his bigger barns and settle into a life of greedy ease?

But the rich man's fantasy is not fulfilled. He dies instead. His soul was required of him suddenly and we get the startled reaction: "These things you have prepared, whose will they be?" And the answer is not the rich man's. The Epicurean fantasy evaporates!

I was watching the British show called *Larkrise to Candleford*. In the production there is a postmistress and a squire landowner. Sir Timothy Midwinter and Dorcus Lane the postmistress are in love. He asked Dorcus to marry him but she, early on in the relationship, turned him down because of the difference in their relative stations in life. But they continue to see one another, to bump into one another in the daily course of their lives over the years.

Midwinter eventually marries a woman who is nice but prefers the city to rural life. Sir Timothy is distanced from her. He still after many years carries a flame for Dorcus. And so, he lives this rather sad, pathetic, and frustrated existence, hoping for something that will never be...

Is that you today?

Charles Crawford was a young man who had decided to take his life. In his early years his stepfather had driven Crawford away from home. He had struggled in school, getting himself into frequent fights and had ended up in a juvenile detention centre. He started to turn his life around until a September day when his fiancée announced that she was breaking off the relationship. It was then that he heard a voice within telling him to jump off a freeway bridge.

And so here he was slipping around an eight-foot-high chain link fence that bordered an overpass and starting to inch his way onto the outside narrow ledge.

At that moment Rajon Begin saw him as he passed by in his truck.

“That’s foolish! What in the world is he doing? Is he a daredevil? One slip and he’s a goner!”

Begin continued his route to his home. Checking back as he swung onto 680 he could see the man still on the overpass. Something about his posture- the slumped shoulders and the bowed head- brought Begin to a sickening realization.

“My God!” he said out loud. “He’s going to jump!”

Begin who had once decided to take his own life thought he knew what the man must be going through. He didn’t do it and now he had a wonderful life- everything he had ever dreamed of- a great family, job and a comfortable home.

He decided to return but got stuck in traffic. Realizing the urgency, he drove up over the curb down a sidewalk and within minutes he was back on the Parkway. At the overpass he slammed on his brakes and parked his truck on the wide concrete divider.

The guy was still there. Dodging traffic Begin yelled “Don’t do that Let’s talk it over with a beer.” For a moment their eyes met but then Crawford looked down at the rail tracks 50 feet below.

“Stay away, Crawford warned. “Nobody cares what I do.”

“I care,” said Begin.

Adrenalin pumping, Begin climbed onto the narrow ledge and edged his way towards Crawford. Crawford was clinging to the wire mesh fence with both hands. His back was to the tracks below. He was bigger and stronger than Begin. Crawford was shaking violently.

Begin began to formulate a plan. One tiny miscalculation or if the bigger man lunged at him Begin realized that he could plummet to his own death.

Without a moment's hesitation, Begin, gripping the fence with his left hand, swung his right foot around Crawford to the other side. With his body now spread-eagled behind Crawford, Begin now had him pinned to the fence. The man couldn't jump without taking Begin with him.

Crawford argued with Begin repeating that he just wanted to die.

Another man stopped to help who was a devout Christian. He saw what Begin was doing and it amazed him. So, he tried to help as well by Talking to Crawford. He also prayed to God for help and for Crawford's and Begin's lives.

Another man, a devout Mormon who had often counselled distraught people stopped to see what he could do and called the police on his cell phone. At 6 ft 5 inches he could reach up over the fence and lock his fingers around Crawford's. He knew that he could not prevent Crawford from jumping. It was a gesture of deep caring.

Crawford continued begging to die.

"Do you have family?"

Crawford said "Three half sisters. My birthday was 2 days ago, and nobody called. Neither did my mother."

His three would be rescuers kept him talking but suddenly Crawford said' to Begin "Get out of my way I don't want to hurt you. I just want to die."

Begin wondered just how long he could hold on.

By now 4 Police cars had showed up and an ambulance. The police thought that the three were doing a good job talking to Crawford and held back.

Suddenly one of the three said to Crawford seeing his build 'Did you play football in high school?'

Crawford said what high school he had played for and one of the three knew someone who had played for that school and asked Crawford if he knew him?

"Oh yeah" said Crawford visibly brightening "We played together." They talked football and it all seemed endless but after awhile Crawford's painful story came out. He told them that he had this voice inside that said " It's the best thing to jump. Nobody wants you!

"Charles" said one of the three if you come over to the other side of this fence we are not going to forget you!"

"Get out of my way and let me die" Crawford cried, "Nobody cares."

"Look behind you said one of the other two men. There is a guy risking his life to save yours. Please don't do this."

Crawford turned to Begin and stared at him. Sobbing he said, "Just let me go."

“No way.” Begin answered, his face now ashen but resolute. If you go, I go.”

Crawford stared at Begin and the two others and finally stopped pushing. Suddenly he said, “I don’t want to be out here any more.”

After the two exhausted men were pulled to safety Crawford was taken away by ambulance.

In the weeks that followed all three men kept in touch with Crawford and one of them arranged a deep-sea fishing tour as promised in the talk down.

Crawford began to embrace the life he actually had and became friends again with his fiancée and now feels that he has been given a second chance to live.

[In reality] “People do care about each other,” he now says. “One of them risked his life to save mine. I can never forget that.”

I continued to watch Larkrise to Candleford and one episode spoke to me. Sir Timothy Midwinter suddenly decided to stop his fantasy for Dorcus Lane.

This is what he said: “**I have decided to live the life I have.**”

David did not have to pursue Bathsheba. He had over his life 7 wives more than one at once and many concubines. He was King and could do what he liked with his absolute power. However, he was still not content. He wanted more. His fantasies demanded it.

Ahithophel could have followed Nathan’s choice to confront the king about his concerns which were probably identical to the prophet Nathan’s. But he didn’t choose that. He chose instead a dark fantasy of revenge that ended in the loss of his own life. Being a wise man, he would know that was the risk when he began it.

The rich man who wanted to build additional barns to store his wealth **was not content to live the life he had.** He didn’t want to share. It was all about him! And he wanted more... but it was not his decision when Reality stepped in.

Sir Timothy was the great landowner. He was wealthy. He had a beautiful wife but for years he was stuck.

Is that you today?

What is the answer?

One day Sir Timothy got it. **The life he already had was a wonderful life to live.** All he had to do was to drop the fantasy and embrace life with all its magic, adventure and hope going forward. **He had to embrace things as they are, first, not as he wished them to be, in order to move forward.**

And what awaited him?

Wonder! A child born to him, the love of his wife and a brand-new beginning in a city far away. He gives u the management of the estate and moves to the city life...

He initially had blundered into fantasy and had to discover that his fantasy was not nearly as wonderful as the **real world**, which though strange at times, is always WONDERFUL even in its darkest tragedies.

**Are we going to embrace the life we have?**

David did finally embrace the life he had after Nathan the prophet faced him with what he had done. And David repented. And then under the Great Grace of God a son was born to him... King Solomon...whose wisdom continues to make the world a better place for us **to celebrate the life we actually have.**

The real world is strange and wonderful, Why? Because the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all those who dwell therein. ...and it is marvellous in our eyes if we think about it. We have a myriad stars to look at, the tiny detail of flowers, the wonder of all living and breathing things, the flight of the hummingbird and the eagle snowflakes in patterns all different and our incredible complexity that makes us human. Yes, at times the bonds of earth may be surly, but it is here in reality that we touch the face of God.

To be matter of fact about this is to blunder into fantasy, and dull fantasy at that.

So, instead of dullness, sadness, hopeless wishing and dark fantasies **we could simply embrace the life we have already!**

And then let **Love** in; Love for God and the neighbor and the stranger within our gates and in this very sad world that we have created, the love of the enemy!

**For This day is the day that the Lord has made.**

Let us rejoice and be glad in it ...now!