

The Lord of Tomorrows

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Date: 04 June 2014

Preacher: Don Coleman

[0 : 00] So, Lord of Tomorrows, that's what I've entitled this.

! I know that a lot of us are familiar, some of the phrases and sentences, principles we've heard many times before, and some of them have almost become axioms of life that even unbelievers will use sometimes.

So, with that considered, then you understand that our focus is going to be who we're trusting for today, for tomorrow, for this next year, for the rest of our lives.

And so, the Lord of Tomorrows. Several years ago, and I'm trying to remember, maybe some of you remember when Katrina hit the southern coast, Mississippi, New Orleans, what year was that? Was it 5.05? Anyway, thank you. I'm not very good at dates either. The reason I say that is I was supposed to go down there with a little bit of a ministry.

[1 : 25] Ah, yeah. Canceled because of that. Well, I did make a couple of trips. As a matter of fact, three trips down to, not New Orleans, but southern coast of Mississippi, specifically to Bay St. Louis.

And our association of churches, then I was in Mississippi. We made several trips, took some groups from our churches, and went down there.

And I will never forget. And I have, I think, told some of this story because it's so much in my mind, etched in my memory. I never will forget it. Not just the event that took place, but even just the visual of it all.

And if you've ever been to a place where a hurricane has come through, then you know what I'm talking about.

If you never have, then there's no way to describe it. It's more than a tornado, though I guess it would be likened to that, especially the big ones like the one that came through Joplin a few years ago.

[2 : 31] And we're just as far as you can see, in all directions, things are just totally leveled. And just quite a sight to see. And our particular mission was to help people who had floodwaters in their homes to clean up and kind of deconstruct so that others who were more knowledgeable could come in and reconstruct.

And so most of these homes had water in them up four or five feet. And so all the sheetrock had to be torn out. And mud, of course, had to be.

I mean, mud that thick. And the slimiest, goopiest, if that's the word, goop, I don't know, mud you've ever seen. I mean, you could barely even stand up without sliding.

It was so slimy. And we had to shovel all that out and get all that out. And not only that, but really, even before we did all that, we had to get all of the furniture and appliances, pretty much everything that was in the house had to get it out.

And most of it had to be thrown away. And so one of these houses, and I never will forget it, because it was a house down on one of the canals that comes in from the Gulf.

[3 : 47] And so it's at sea level. And this house built up on stilts. So the first floor of the house was up about where this ceiling is here on stilts.

And yet still the water not only went up that high, but it went over the top of the house. So you can imagine what kind of storm surge there was. We'll say that in the end, after we came back, we discovered or heard later that they eventually had to tear the whole house down.

So all we did was kind of for naught. But I guess the idea was that we could probably, they could maybe salvage the home if we cleaned it out, gutted it out, all of that.

So that's what we went there to do. And I remember standing there, you know, at some point when we got all the stuff out of the house and we piled it all on the street.

And I looked at it, kind of measured it into my mind, and it was like six feet high, this pile of stuff out of this home. Six feet high, probably a good 10 feet deep or wide, and 30 feet long.

[4 : 55] If you believe it. And that was the case, because we're talking about, you know, not just appliances and furniture and boxes and storage things and just everything that's in a house, but also sheetrock and, you know, other things that had to be gutted out.

All that piled out in front of this house. And I got to looking at that and thinking about it, and then I look over at the house and recalling that, you know, when they come through after a disaster like that, they put a big red X on the homes.

I don't know if you've ever been where there's been a hurricane or tornado, and that seems to be kind of the method that they use, these kind of disasters. And so they put a big red X.

And if anybody died in the home, then they put the number of people who died at the bottom part of that X. And so I'm looking over at this house, and there's the big X, and there's a one at the bottom portion of that X, because the lady we were helping, her husband died in that storm surge.

He, believe it or not, did probably the most silly thing, foolish thing that you could do. He tried to hide or tried to seek protection up in the attic of the home. And the storm surge came over, and he drowned in the top of this house, attic of the house.

[6 : 20] And so I'm just kind of taking all that in, and I remembered, and that's why I'm recalling this for our study tonight, I remembered standing there and thinking about a portion of the passage that we're going to be looking at tonight, where James asks the question, for what is your life?

What is your life? I'm looking at all of this stuff out there, and here's her husband who's died. She lost her husband, and even after we came home another week, I think, later, lost her home.

Of course, it was rebuilt, but again, the question, what is your life? And if you ever make a trip to do any kind of work like that or help people in a big disaster, then you kind of begin to really get a hold of the answer to that question.

What is your life? Well, your life is not in all the things that you've accumulated. Your life is not even in some kind of future you think you've secured for yourself.

That is an earthly future, plans you've made and goals you've made. I guarantee you that for this particular family, it was an absolute life changer.

[7 : 41] There wasn't any way to go back. No way that any of their plans and thoughts of the future could continue to be realized.

It was a total game changer, life changer for them. And so maybe it's good to, if you've never been in that kind of situation, just listening to the story as I've related it, good to ask yourself that question.

What really is your life? And what is it? Well, it's not in what you have. It's in how you live it.

And really, I would say, to whom you're living it for. For whom you're living it for. And that's really the answer to the question. What is your life? And I think that answer is given to us in this particular passage that we're going to be looking at in James chapter 4.

According to James, life is what life does. Now, I'm saying according to James, the book as a whole, this is what James is teaching us.

[8 : 55] Life is what life does. And according to James, the value of your life is in how you live it, who you live it for, and in whom you place your trust and hope.

That is the value, how to put any kind of value on your life. And this is what we learn in the book of James as a whole. Now, we're only going to be considering a part of this, really part of this question about what is your life in the passage we're looking at tonight.

Now, here's this recent study. The average American. And, of course, you've got all these here.

And I don't know if you can relate to all of these. Some of these, I think you can.

I think we'd be surprised that maybe on some of these items we may actually spend more time. And there are other things you could add to. We spend 13 years watching television.

I think that's probably a little bit low for a bunch of people in America, especially young people. The average American consumes 109,354 pounds of food at the cost of 89,281.

[10 : 16] I will say to you that this study is about 10 years old. Couldn't find one any more recent. And so I think the dollar amount probably is way, way, especially in the last two or three years, maybe even doubled.

The average American makes 1,811 trips to McDonald's. Now, I know James over here said that wouldn't be him. Maybe not for all of us.

Maybe none of us in this room. But McDonald's is not one of my favorites. I probably would make that many trips to Wendy's or something like that. I know this group over here, you go every Sunday night.

Let's see if 52, 53, however many Sundays a year. How long have you been doing it? Let's see if we could add all that up. Huh? Years. Years. So maybe we need to bump that up a little bit for some people.

Not McDonald's, but Wendy's. Now, here's the question. Spend \$6,881. And I left something off of that.

[11 : 24] Doing what? Well, I went back and checked my little list. And it's this. 6,881 trips to a vending machine or spend on a vending machine.

Cokes, candy bars, things like that. And that wouldn't apply to me because I just, I don't hardly do that. But most Americans do. Eats 35, now this definitely applies to me.

He eats 35,138 cookies and 1,483 pounds of candy. Cookies, yeah. I don't know.

Maybe for me that number's a little bit low. Catches 304 colds. I don't know how they, you know, they come up with these numbers. But that's kind of an amazing thing.

Now, I guess that's any kind of cold, any kind of little snuffle, 304 colds. The average American, rather, is involved in six motor vehicle accidents in his lifetime.

[12 : 31] And Chris is an average. And, you know. Lifetime is a week. That's supposed to be, yeah, it's supposed to be a lifetime. Lifetime is a week. That's supposed to be a lifetime. So now, if you have that many a year, then you don't have insurance.

I'll tell you that. Or you're paying a whole lot for it. Hospitalized 10 times. Of course, I don't know how many people in my churches over the years.

And it seems especially men. I guess that's not an odd thing. But I don't know how many men I have had in my churches that have never been to the hospital, not one time.

Until just before they die. And so, you know, one time for some. But average 10 times. And this is the last one because I duplicated this one.

I don't know how it happened. But spends 24 years sleeping. 24 years sleeping. And if you don't like that one, sleeps for 24 years.

[13 : 36] Okay. I don't know why I duplicated that one. Anywho. Now, someone then, and this you'll have to fill in the blank.

And this is kind of amusing. Someone has reduced the typical life down to seven ages. All right. Seven ages of a life. First, spills.

Spills. Second, drills. I guess a learning process. Third, thrills.

You know, the young life. Thrilling young life. Four, bills. If you're a little older, then the bills. Five, ills.

I know that looks like Roman numeral, but it's a capital I-L-L. This font makes it look all the same, but it's I-L-L-S. Ills.

[14 : 35] Then pills. And then the final stage, wills. All right. So there it is. Spills, drills, thrills, bills, ills, bills, wills.

Sounds like a Dr. Seuss book. All right. So, James chapter 4, 13 through 16, addresses really just one important aspect of how we should live our lives.

You know, when you're talking about how we're to live it, who we live it for, in whom we are to trust and hope, that's the whole Bible covers that subject.

James is going to cover really just one part of that. And he's going to be dealing with the sin of presumption. Presumption. Presuming upon the future.

And when I say future, I mean anything from the next minute on, the next second on is the future for us. And it's a sin, the sin of presumption.

[15 : 39] I would say it's the close cousin of arrogance, if you want to put that. In fact, if you could list it in order. The father's pride, the child is arrogance, and the child's child is presumption.

They're so closely connected. So the sin of presumption, that's what we're going to be dealing with here. Presumption is what causes a person to think, time is always on my side.

This kind of defines the mentality of those who are presumptuous about life. Time is on my side.

And beyond that, personal ability, the desire to increase wealth, are the only things that really matter when planning the future and setting goals.

This is kind of a mentality of presumptuousness. And it's a sin. Because, why? Because it completely cuts God out of it.

We're presuming. Well, I guess it doesn't cut God out entirely sometimes, because we presume upon Him. That we just presume He's going to always do what we want Him to do, always going to be there.

[16:55] And so, it's presumptuousness. So that's what we're dealing with. Dealing with presumptuousness. And so, number one, the sin of presumption, what it is.

What it is. And I gave a short little definition, not really a definition, but a kind of mentality, a way to describe the mentality of the presumptuous. Now we want to get a little more serious about just what it is.

And we're defining it by the way James describes it here. First of all, presumption is a sin of the tongue.

Sin of the tongue. That's the first thing that we can define when it comes to a presumptuous life.

Now, you know, James just can't seem to get away from the tongue.

He keeps talking about it. In fact, we were on that subject last time. Because verses 11, 12, we have the slanderous tongue.

[18:00] That was the focus, remember, last time. In those two verses. And so, in these verses, starting with verse 13, a presumptuous tongue. Presumptuous tongue.

And this is interesting because I think we'll see that it's not speech towards someone. It's speech in a different direction. So, what are we talking about there?

Just remember that the tongue is connected to so many sins that we commit. Now, how does he put it here? He says, come now, you who say.

That's the first part of verse 13. And so, that's why I say this is connected to the tongue. The idea here, though, is not speaking to someone or at someone, like the last two verses, dealing with the slanderous tongue that we would use toward someone.

But this is speaking to yourself. speaking to oneself. That's the idea. Come now, you who say.

Because he's going to go from here and give a little scenario. This is what you say.

[19:09] You're saying. But you're really saying it to yourself. And so, it's kind of the tongue not physically being used. It's the tongue or speaking, the whole idea of speaking, but speaking inside.

Speaking to yourself. And that's the idea here. Like, for example, we have a couple examples from Luke, actually, both of these from Luke.

Luke 12, 16 to 21, you know, the parable of the successful farmer. You're familiar with that parable. Let me read it to you. He thought within himself.

Here's this successful farmer. I mean, he's, you know, he's very fruitful crops. And so, he thinks within himself.

All right. So, he's not speaking to someone else or, you know, sharing anything outside. This is all inside himself. So, he's thinking within himself.

[20:06] And he's saying. Saying to whom? To himself. What shall I do? I am so successful. What shall I do? Since I have no room to store my crops. I mean, my crops have produced so bountifully.

What am I going to do? He's got a real problem, doesn't he? And so, he said. I will do this. I will pull down my barns and build greater. And there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul.

Here he is again. Speaking to himself. Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take your ease. Eat. Drink. Be merry. But God said to him, Fool, this night your soul will be required of you.

Then whose will those things be which you have provided? So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. So you read between the lines and here's a man who is successful.

Nothing wrong with success. Here's a man who's making plans to take care of his bounty and his wealth and there's nothing wrong with making plans to do such.

[21:11] But the implication is he's totally left God out of this thing. And so, you know, he's not asking what should I do, God. What should I do? He's speaking to himself.

So it's a presumptuous kind of mentality, kind of life. The other example, well, I had another one. I'll do it.

There it is. Is Luke 18.10. This one too should be familiar. Another parable. Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other tax collector.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself. So he's praying to himself. That really makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? And so he's speaking to himself. God, actually he's not speaking to God, the God, he's speaking to himself.

God, I thank you that I'm not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector who's looking over at the publican, you know. This tax collector, I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

[22 : 16] And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Oh, what a contrast between two men.

One's praying to himself and the other's actually praying to God. And Jesus said, I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. That is, he had every reason to believe that he belonged to God.

The other one had no reason to believe that he belonged to God or was a true believer at all. A presumptuous life, it begins with the tongue. I mean, it's involving the tongue where you speak to yourself.

Second, presumption says that tomorrow is ruled by one's own will. One's own will.

Today or tomorrow, we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell and make a profit. So the key word there is will.

[23 : 16] We will. And so, tomorrow, all my plans for tomorrow, even today, tomorrow, next week, next year, on down the road, my 10-year plan, whatever it is, you know, the goals that I've set for myself, all of it ruled by what I want to do, what I say, the will.

And that's what presumption does. Presumption says that life continues according to man's will, not God's will, not God's. We will, he said.

Today, we will. I mean, it just covers all of the, you know, kind of the scope of a life. Today, we will. Tomorrow, we will.

We will this year. And the implication is the next year, next year. Who will? I will. God will?

No, I will. And this is presumption. It's ruled. My life is ruled by my own will. And most people live according to that. And the sad thing is there are many believers, you know, that they're not careful can slip into that kind of thinking where we kind of separate, you know, our plans and our goals, separate that from what God wants.

[24 : 43] In fact, we sin when we don't bring Him into that whole equation. And that's presumptuousness. Third, presumption says that man is the master of his own life.

We will go to such and such a city. So here's the action verbs here. We will go, spend a year there, buy, sell.

It's all a part of the activity of the life. And who's master of it? The presumptuous. The presumptuous. Master of his or her own life.

Going where he decides to go. Spending time, the time he desires. Buying, selling, all of those things.

Fourth, presumption says that success in life is the fruit of one's own skills and abilities. It's the fruit of your own skills and abilities.

[25 : 56] So, if you're going to be successful, guess what? It's because you have the strength, you have the ability, you have the talents. That's the presumptuous way of thinking.

We will make a profit. it. So, it's all self-determinant. See? And that's not the way the Christian should live.

That's presumptuousness. speaking of ourselves as if life were our right. You know, our right.

And not necessarily God's grace. We speak to ourselves as if everything we need to succeed in life is already in us. It's inside here. I'm the one that's going to make my way.

And if I'm going to be successful, it's because I do it. I work hard. I use my abilities and talents and so forth. This is the sin of presumption. What it is.

[27 : 02] Second, the sin of presumption, how we guard against it. How we guard against it. And so, we need to acknowledge three realities of human life.

If we're going to guard against presumption, we've got to remember these three realities. And then that will help us. First, reality. The ignorance of human life.

We're ignorant. You do not know what will happen tomorrow. That's the first part of verse 14. We have an ignorance. How can we be presumptuous about today, tomorrow, next week, next year, and say this is what we're going to do.

I'm going to do this. I'm going to go there. I'm going to accomplish this and reap this kind of reward and this kind of fruit. I'm going to do all of these. How can we be presumptuous about all that when we are totally ignorant of what's going to happen even the very next second?

This is how we guard against presumption. We come to the place where we acknowledge these realities of human life. We cannot presume upon our own plans for the future because we're ignorant.

[28 : 24] Proverbs 27, 1, Do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring forth. You just don't know. Now what it says, do not boast about tomorrow.

It's not talking about boasting about yourself or boasting in accomplishments. You're just boasting that what you're planning to do tomorrow, you're going to do. Boasting that what you plan to succeed at, that will become a reality.

You're boasting in these things. But the Bible says don't boast about tomorrow, don't count on tomorrow because you don't know what a day is going to bring forth.

No man knows, but God knows. That's why He then should be brought in to all of our decisions about today, tomorrow, next year, ten years, whenever.

The second reality, the frailty of human life. The frailty. These are guards.

[29 : 32] If we will embrace these, acknowledge these realities of human life, then we won't choose a presumptuous life. The frailty of human life is another. For what is your life?

It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then it vanishes away. I mean, think about this concept.

I mean, we're familiar with this. We may be familiar in a different version of the Bible. I think the King James uses the word mist. I think some of the more modern translations, I'm not sure that some even use the word wisp of smoke.

Like smoke. But really, smoke's not because smoke will kind of endure for a while. But a mist, you know, or a vapor, it's just there and it's just gone.

Not even any remnant of it. Not any visual remnant of it. And this is how James is likening our life.

The frailty of human life.

[30 : 36] So we cannot presume upon our own plans for the future because human life is finite. And even worse than that, it's frail. I mean, it's just so brief and it's here and it's gone.

So we're frail, just like a vapor or mist. We are temporary.

James says a life that appears for a little time. Temporary. So we're frail, we're temporary, and even worse, we're gone without a trace.

That's kind of the idea behind a life that vanishes away. I know that a person can leave a footprint in this world by the things he or she does and a legacy and different things, but even that has an ending point.

It vanishes eventually and in light of eternity, it is just simply here and gone and gone without a trace. The third reality, the dependence of human life.

[31 : 53] The dependence of human life, in this sense dependent upon God. And this is what James says in verse 15, instead you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.

Now contrast that with how this discussion began. James talking about kind of setting up a fictitious person, but a very real to life kind of person who says to himself, I will go here and there and do this and next year and succeed and this and make a profit.

I will. And compare that with what he says in verse 15. Instead, you ought to say what? If the Lord wills. Now he's not giving you some formula, by the way, to follow.

And so in prayer, all you need to do is say, Lord, whatever you will. That's kind of fatalistic. You can be very specific in your prayers. And, you know, more detail than just saying, if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.

This is just kind of a maybe an overall statement of a kind of reality that when it's fleshed out in life becomes very specific.

[33 : 05] We're bringing God into all of our plans and all of our prayers. And as we say, plan to do this or go there or take this job or move there or make this purchase or whatever it may be, we're laying that out before the Lord and we're asking Him to give us counsel and lead us and help us

with all of these plans.

And if they're long-term plans especially, God, you know, you're constantly in prayer about God's desire, God's will for our lives, for your life.

So I would say to you that James is not prohibiting planning and setting goals. He's not teaching kind of a let go and let God kind of fatalistic approach to life.

There's nothing wrong with making plans and setting goals. But James is prohibiting self-centered, self-reliant plans, plans that restrict God only to Sundays and only to that which pertains to, quote, spiritual things, end quote.

Where we have a tendency to separate spiritual things from secular things. This is God's part and this is my part. My work, business is business, and God and church, that's something different.

[34 : 28] For a believer, there is no such thing as secular. Everything is spiritual. And so it's not just relegating God to what happens on Sunday or our, quote, worship or religion.

And I would even add to that, it's not just simply restricting God to the big things in life and the hard things and such. We kind of have a tendency to compartmentalize our devotion to God and compartmentalize when we think we ought to pray to Him when we need to include We're to include Him in all things, all things, even some of those things that we would consider to be very small.

And so dependence, that's the third reality. We are utterly dependent upon God. And we don't even sometimes realize it.

Third, and finally, the sin of presumption, how serious it is. how serious it is. It's a very serious, the sin of presumption.

More serious than I think we are willing to admit. Presumption is serious because it is arrogant. It's serious because it is arrogant.

[35 : 48] What does he say in verse 16? but now you boast. Literally, it's the word glory. You glory in your arrogance.

What's he talking about? You glory in your making your own decisions, calling your own shots, making your own plans without consulting God.

You glory in your own desire for this or that or notoriety or wealth or accomplishments and you glory in those things because it feeds the pride.

All this is spawned or comes out of the pride of life. And so you glory in that. All such boasting, he says, or glorying is evil.

It's evil. So this is pretty serious sin. It's evil. It glorifies self. That's why it's evil. And really, this kind of thinking, presumptuousness, it comes out of a heart that is evil.

[37 : 04] A kind of thinking of the heart and tendency of the heart that we've not fully dealt with and not desire to purge from our hearts.

And so it comes out in our way of thinking. And our way of thinking then filters out in the plans we make and decisions we make and we leave God out.

So it's a serious sin. Presumption is serious also because it is willful. It's willful. Now, there might be a thought, well, let me read the verse.

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. Verse 17. And the reason I say that it's evil or rather serious sin because it's willful, it's a willful sin.

There are two kinds of sin. I guess we could maybe boil it down to two kind of categories. There are sins of commission, right?

[38 : 11] Those are willful sins we're talking about. I know it's sin, I do it anyway. And then there are sins of what? Omission, of course.

Omission. That is, I just omit things out of my life. Things that I know that I should be doing that God wants me to do or omit God out of my life. We might have a tendency to think that this particular sin of presumption is a sin of omission.

You know, we're to consult God, but we just don't. We're to ask God's will and ask for God's counsel and direction for our life, but we just don't.

So we omit that out of our lives. This is not a sin of omission. This is a sin of commission.

Presumption is a sin of commission to him who knows to, what?

Do good. It's something that we're to do. And if we don't do it, it's not that we're just omitting it. It's an active, I guess we could call it an active omission, which is really a commission.

[39 : 21] We're committing sin willfully, knowingly. We're not consulting God and we know better. This is what James is saying. To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

shame on you. The people he's writing to and the Holy Spirit is saying that to us because it was written to us. Shame on you. You're not just leaving something out of your life here. You are premeditatedly, determinately, making a choice to live your life apart from my guidance and from my will. You're not including me in prayer. You're not praying about certain things in your life that you should be. And so the good he's talking about here to do good, those who know to do good but don't do it to him it is sin, the good is in this context to include God in all of our plans. Whether they're daily, our daily plans, the plans you have even today or otherwise, plans tomorrow, next week, next month, next year, however far out you have made your plans for life. [40 : 32] And so presumption, the sin of presumption, very, very serious sin. Thank you.