

Plain Christians in a Vain World

by David Cooper

A Christian's life should be built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and should seek to glorify Him in all that they do, avoiding a vain and empty life.

Duration: 1:30:43

Scripture: Matthew 6:20, Luke 14:33, 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, 1 Timothy 2:10, James 2:17, 1 Peter 1:7, 1 John 4:20

Topics: "Plain Christians"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the vanity and emptiness of the world and its inability to provide lasting satisfaction. He emphasizes the importance of focusing on God and His Word rather than pursuing worldly possessions and pleasures. The preacher also highlights the significance of loving God and one another as a true test of being a Christian. He references the book of James to emphasize the importance of faith accompanied by works, and encourages the congregation to live a life of genuine faith and lasting works.

Transcript

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A special thank you to all who support this ministry. I think God is very good. What a privilege to be sitting in a congregation like this, listening to the true life story.

Life story. Undeniable that Jesus Christ changes lives, fills voids, heals marriages, and gives us purpose in life. And every Christian heart connects and says, Amen.

And if your heart doesn't connect and you feel like a stranger in a family meeting, the family's got an open door this morning. If you're sitting here and your heart feels alien, feels a little bit on the outside, don't know what this is all about, you must be born again. Jesus said it very plainly, you must be born again.

And the experience of Eve from Reno can be the experience of every man. Not exactly, it doesn't have to all have, every testimony I've heard has differences, but that longing for reality with God and that humble seeking and fearful taking of steps to seek God is a common denominator in every Christian testimony. And coming to the cross of Christ and confessing our sins, seeing his cross as the justification of the unrighteous, and faith rising up, those are the common denominators of a Christian testimony.

You know, I want to praise God for his goodness. You know, I don't know if anyone else noticed, we had two beautiful sunshiny days since it flooded here, and just how many times out there working in the muck and out back there driving things around and thinking this would be so much more miserable if it was drizzling rain outside. I praise the Lord for his kindness, and it encourages our hearts to say, God must have something good in all this for us.

It's easier to say that when it's sunshining. Praise God for that. Well, I want to also thank you visitors for coming, you brothers from Indiana and your wives.

It's good to have you here, your children. God bless you all. Good to see you here, Eli.

So I hope that this morning can be a blessing to all of us. Can we kneel for prayer right where we are? Let's just kneel and ask the Lord's blessing on this next hour. Amen, Lord Jesus.

Thank you. Thank you for the testimony that we just heard. It is of your doing we acknowledge you, the author and the doer of these works.

Hallowed be thy name this morning. Most high. Hallowed be thy name.

We're glad to be gathered here under the name of Jesus Christ. Lord, would you look with your kindness upon every needy soul in this room. Pray you take our messages today.

The opening. This testimony. The children's lesson.

The things I'm going to say. Lord, would you blend it all together to profit the church and build us up this morning. Do commit myself to you.

Commit the word of God to you this next hour. I pray for these people that you'd open up hearts. You'd take away everything that's in the way to receive the word of God.

And it might have its free way. Teach us thy way. Submit unto you in the name of Jesus.

Amen. A while ago, I had a message on reality and religion. And just would remind you that as we close that message, we talked a lot about the world.

And having a right relationship with the world. Separation from the world. And I'd like to continue this morning.

I'd like to talk about plain Christians in a vain world. This is a message that I shared in Ohio and I felt the Lord would have me share it at home here as well. I'd like to say, speak about plain Christians in a vain world.

Now, I realize that when I say the word plain in Lancaster County, that I need to define what I mean. That can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people here. But before we talk about what we mean

by plain Christians, I think it's more helpful to define what we mean by vain world.

What does vain world mean? Anybody have any suggestions? When we say the world is vain, what does it mean? Empty. Chasing after things of no benefit or value. Any other thoughts? Vanished away.

Drifting aimlessly. Someone back here had something, Nathan? Conceited. Proud.

Seeking the pleasure of the flesh instead of the spirit. Okay, anything outside the will of God? Living for self. Man on the throne.

Those are good. I think that's unfulfilling. Amen.

Well, I brought an illustration this morning. Left it down here. I brought my soap and my wand this morning so that I could spend all of our time here this morning and blow some bubbles.

My daughter Dorcas this morning got me these bubbles together. That one didn't work. Maybe this will work.

There's some. That's a nice one. Look how pretty that one is.

It has some blue in it. And you might be asking yourself, if I were to stand up here for the next half hour, what a waste of our morning. And you know, when you reach out, some of these here are really lovely.

Like that one. That was a really nice one. Oh, like that one.

Did you see that? I think I want to keep it. Oh, where'd it go? This is a perfect example of vanity. You chase after it and then catch it.

And oh, there's nothing there. That's a vanity. Looks like something's there.

Looks so pretty. Something so attractive. But when you reach out and you take hold of it, it's gone.

Just the thing you thought would fill the void doesn't. The world is vain. Vain world.

Vanity. Vain means empty. Purposeless.

Without any lasting benefit, benefiting result. And in a Christian's life, it is a life that will not pass the fire spoken of in 1 Corinthians 3. Let's turn there. 1 Corinthians 3, starting in verse 11, it says, For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now, if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, lots of things you can do with your Christian life, every man's work shall be made manifest. For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire. And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

And if any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. And if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire. Vanity, the vain world, is a life that will not pass that fire.

That is vain. Those things in our lives that we do, that when we come to this day, and they are burned. The fire of judgment, the fire of examination, like the scripture says, that God will try the heart and the reins and the inner motives, and every action will be examined to its very foundation in the life.

And some of those are going to be burned up under that examination, made void, made like a bubble. Vain is a life that will not pass the fire. Those things that do not stand the fire of that day are vain.

I'd like to just look at how the Bible uses vain. Let's examine the use of this word in a few passages here. Jeremiah 43, he says, And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair.

And he's talking about the day of judgment when he would bring all the lovers against Jerusalem to destroy her. And he's saying, you can do whatever you want to do and it will have no effect. It will have no effect.

Proverbs 12,11 says, He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread, but he that followeth vain persons, which is the opposite of a tiller of the land, someone who is chasing after vain things, is void of understanding. He that tilleth his land, meaning he gets out there and actively gets into the soil and does his work, shall have plenty of bread, but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough. Matthew 6,7 says, When ye pray, use not vain repetition, Jesus taught us.

Well, what does he mean by vain repetition? Just empty. To no purpose. Words used to no purpose.

Words that have no heart connection. They're just coming out like a bubble. Vain repetition, Jesus calls it.

But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Well, what does that mean? What does it mean to worship God and it's vain? Meaning it has no lasting result. There's no reward for it.

There's no hearing of God from it. There's no pleasure from it. Acts 4,25 says, Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? Talking about, let's break God's yoke.

Let's get out from underneath God's supervision and domination. And let's win the world and conquer the world and conquer His Christ and everything. And He that sitteth in the heavens laughs and says, What vanity for men to try to break the yoke of God and get out from His caring, loving supervision.

That's vanity. Empty. Purposeless.

Romans 1,21 It says that when they knew God and they glorified Him not as God, they became vain in their imaginations. Meaning, the things they thought about no longer had practical, beneficial application. It was just vanity.

In their imaginations, men became vain. Purposeless. Unfulfilled.

Stuff. That would not stand the fire of 1 Corinthians 3. Romans 13,4 Talking about the government, it says, He beareth not the sword in vain. Meaning, He's not just holding it there to no purpose.

That when she judges evildoers, she has a sword for a reason. To execute judgment. 1 Corinthians 15,2 Paul says, If ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.

Unless your faith is but an empty bubble with no substance to it. And it's gone. If you don't hold on to what I'm telling you, if you don't remember it, it's all going to be gone.

Vanity. In Galatians, Paul went up to talk to Peter and he says, I shared with him all the gospel that I preached, lest I should have run in vain. And I think what Paul is saying there is, I have a concern that maybe I'm going the wrong direction.

And he went to Jerusalem by revelation, laid out what gospel he was preaching to Peter and James and John there, and they approved it, gave him the right hand of fellowship and said, You're on the right track, Paul. And Paul said, Unless I had been running to no purpose and end up somewhere where I had to turn around and go back and find my way another way. Vain.

Philippians, let's see, Galatians 5,26 says, Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another and envying one another. Well, vainglory really is a judgment on glory itself, on pride. If you understand, in the very word, it judges pride as being vain.

To bring glory to myself is vanity. Because it's empty. I'm the one bringing the glory to myself, and it won't do what I intend it to do.

I want the respect of everyone else or whatever motives we have, but the Bible says it's vainglory. It's empty glory. The glory that really matters is the one that comes from God.

When God puts glory on a person's life and says, I approve of this man. I approve of this woman. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.

Philippians 2,3 says, and James 2,20 says, Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Why does he call the man, O vain man? Because the subject he's talking about is what you're saying, that a man can say, I have faith, and you have works. Well, he's saying that's vanity. If the plow never gets in the ground, you're not going to have any corn.

If there's no work, if there's nothing you do, if it never manifests in any real profit to anybody or heaven, it's vanity. Your faith is a bubble, floating, just waiting for someone to reach out and try to get it, and it's gone. Vain speaks of something without purpose, a useless waste of time and life, and something that will deliver no benefit.

Thus, vanity has come to mean, specifically, a show of pride and self-awareness. We call a person who is aware of himself, vain. And the Scripture says that will benefit you nothing.

How many benefits come to people who are self-conscious? Is there any benefit? Anybody here really appreciate a vain, glorious person? When they're stuck on themselves, and they're combing their hair in every mirror, and they're checking their pants if their shoes are just right, and, you know, they're just all self. Anybody here really appreciate that, and honor that person, and they're getting the glory that they're looking for? No. It's vanity.

It's a little bubble that you're in, thinking you look so beautiful, but it has no purpose, no help to you, no benefit to anyone. And so the word vain has come to mean pride, in a judgment against pride. For pride and self-awareness will bring no lasting, eternal benefit to the person spending his time and his life in it.

Proud, self-centered thoughts are vain thoughts. But vain thoughts include much more than self-centered, proud thoughts. Vain thoughts are more than just proud, self-centered thoughts.

Vain thoughts are any thought that is purposeless and does not benefit a Christian's eternal life. Pride is like a bubble. It's fun for the one blowing, impresses other naive souls, and it disappoints everyone when it pops, leaving nothing but to show for it.

I think David summarized it very well when he said this in Psalms 119. He said, I hate vain thoughts. When I think about my mind, I hate thoughts that have no purpose, that are going nowhere, that I get to the end of my hour-and-a-half drive, and I look back at what my mind's been doing for an hour-and-a-half, and I have nothing to show for it.

That is vain. I hate it. But thy law do I love.

Blessed is the man who spends the hour-and-a-half in the law of God, listening to the Bible on tape or memorizing some profitable use of his life. Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she should be praised. When we talk about the vain world, we are talking about its emptiness, its unprofitableness, and its inability to deliver any lasting good to our souls in eternity.

When we talk about the vain world, that's what we're talking about. That world that can do us no good at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. Isaiah 55, 1 says, Ho, everyone that thirsts.

And then it says this, God asks this question, Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? Why do you chase a life that doesn't satisfy your hunger? You're spending your substance to buy something that will not fill the hunger that you feel. And God says, Why are you doing that? Why are you spending your money for that which is not bread? Come to Me. Spend your life for Me.

I'll fill you with water. I'll fill you with wine. I'll fill your hunger till you're satisfied.

That's what He says there in Isaiah 55. I want to take, for instance, the latest fashion in shoes. Now, I had a man in the meeting there in Ohio that was wearing a pair of these shoes, and I had to apologize for stepping on his toes.

But, I'm just going to use this as an example. The latest fashion in shoes, I'm just going to get real specific, is a real flat shoe that's kind of rounded, and it comes out maybe two to three inches beyond the end of your toe, and then it's square on the end and flat, and comes down to a thin rectangle right at the toe. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? Isn't that the latest thing? It seems like everybody's wearing them.

It's not like a cowboy boot. You know, cowboy boots are pointed for a purpose. Anybody tell me why cowboy boots are pointed? Because you get them in the stirrup.

And get them out. Now, what's the purpose of tapering your shoe down like that and sticking it two or three inches out beyond the end of your foot? There's one answer. Anybody know it? Okay, vanity.

I was thinking of a different word. How about fashion? Fashion. That is the only reason for that shoe.

Unless I'm mistaken. Maybe I don't see everything. Maybe somewhere someone doesn't want to drop things on his toes, and so he needs an extra part of his shoe out there or something.

But I don't believe so. I think it's a fashion. And why is everybody buying them? Because they're following a vain world.

Just fashion. That is vanity. It is nothing but the pride of life, and it is worldly.

Now, that doesn't mean that some poor man that goes to the effort to reuse it and gets a pair of shoes like that because he has nothing else to wear is a worldly man because he wears it. I'm not saying that. Hear what I'm saying.

But I am saying that the man who designed that shoe up in some high-rise building in New York City or somewhere designed it for vain, proud, fashionable men. And the young man that stood on the stage in front of all the designers and showed off his whole decor and finished it off with that shoe is a worldly man. Anyone want to disagree with that? That whole room is full of worldly men.

When I want to show off how thin I am, how strong I am, how nice my hair is, how rich I am, how neat I am, that is vanity and worldly. When some attribute about myself that I admire moves me to dress and behave in such a way to reveal it to others, that is the pride of life. That is vanity.

And that is worldly. Am I on track? Will anyone say me nay? If I am admiring myself and then I act in such a way that it leads others to do the same, am I not worldly? Isn't that the principle behind vain people? The people of this world are determined to get attention to themselves. But what should a Christian's determination be? Not I, but Christ be honored, loved, exalted.

Be seen, be known, be heard. No show. No ostentation.

Let's just talk a moment about when you're alone with a mirror. When you're alone with a mirror and only your heart knows what goes on when it's just you and the mirror. But if you examine that area of your life, it will tell you a lot about where you are with the vain world.

A mirror promotes self-consciousness. I grew up with sisters in my home. I know what they do in front of the mirror.

And it manifests a lot. A lot. What goes on in front of the mirror manifests a lot.

But the Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us of others' consciousness. Being conscious of other people. The Scriptures speak much of the vanity of Jerusalem, Babylon, and Assyria.

Moreover, the Lord saith, because the daughter of Zion are haughty, they walked with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, making a tinkling with their feet. Therefore, the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughter of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts. In that day, the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their claws, and their round tires like the moon.

I'm not sure what that is. The chains, the bracelets, the mufflers, the bonnets, the ornaments of the legs, the headbands, the tablets, the earrings, the rings, the nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, the mantles, the wimples, the crisping pins, the glasses, the fine linen, the hoods, the veils. And it shall come to pass, instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink, and instead of a girdle, a rent, and instead of a well-set hair, baldness, and instead of a stomacher, a girdling of sackcloth, and burning instead of beauty.

That's how God looked at all the beauty, and all those things that they were caught up in, in Jerusalem. Ezekiel speaks of Assyria, it says, she doted upon the Assyrians, captains and rulers, clothed more gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men. The Chaldeans were

portrayed in vermillion, it says, girdled with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to after the manner of the Babylonian of Chaldea in the land of their nativity.

They were macho men. The men of Assyria were good-looking. They wore the latest belt, says here.

They had the finest color, rode horses. They were Marlboro men, if ever there were. They were tough guys, those Chaldeans.

Princes, all of them, noble. This is what we mean by the vain world. The church in the world walked far apart on the changing shores of time.

The world was singing a giddy song, and the church a hymn sublime. Come, give me your hand, said the merry world, and walk with me this way. But the good church hid her snowy hands and solemnly answered, Nay, nay, I will not give you my hand at all, and I will not walk with you.

Your way is the way that leads to death. Your words are all untrue. Nay, walk with me, but a little space, said the world with a kindly air.

The road I walk is a pleasant road, and the sun shines always there. Your path is thorny and rough and rude, but mine is broad and plain. My way is paved with flowers and dew, and yours with tears and pain.

The sky to me is always blue. No want, no toil I know. The sky above you is always dark.

Your lot is a lot of woe. There's room enough for you and me to travel side by side. Half shyly, the church gave Him her hand of snow.

And the old world grasped it and walked along, saying in accents low, Your dress is too simple to please my taste. I will give you pearls to wear, rich velvets and silks for your graceful form, and diamonds to deck your hair. The church looked down at her plain white robes, and then at the dazzling world, and she blushed as she saw His handsome lip with a smile contemptuous curled.

I will change my dress for a costlier one, said the church with a smile of grace. Then her pure white garments drifted away, and the world gave in their place beautiful satins and shining silks, roses and gems and costly pearls, while over her forehead her bright hair fell, crisped in a thousand curls. Your house is too plain, said the proud old world.

I will build you one like mine, with walls of marble and towers of gold and furniture ever so fine. So he built her a costly and a beautiful house. Most splendid it was to behold.

Her sons and her beautiful daughters dwelt there, gleaming in purple and gold. Rich fairs and shows in the halls were held, and the world and His children were there. Laughter and music and feasts were heard in the place that was meant for prayer.

There were cushioned seats for the rich and the gay to sit in their pomp and the pride, but the poor who were clad in shabby array sat meekly down outside. You give too much to the poor, said the world, far more than you ought to do. If they're in need of shelter and food, why need it trouble you? Go, take your money, and buy rich robes, buy horses and carriages fine, buy pearls and jewels and dainty foods, buy the rarest and costliest wine.

My children, they dote on all these things, and if you their love would win, you must do as they do and walk in the ways that they are walking. So the poor were turned from her door in scorn, and she heard not the orphans cry, but she drew her beautiful robes aside as the widows went weeping by. Then the sons of the world and the sons of the church walked closely hand and heart, and only the Master, who knoweth all, could tell the two apart.

Then the church sat down at her ease and said, I am rich and my goods increase. I have need of nothing or ought to do but to laugh and dance and feast. And the sly world heard and mockingly set aside the church, beautiful church, and her shame is her glory and pride.

The angel drew near to the mercy seat and whispered in sighs her name. Then the loud anthems of rapture were hushed and heads were covered with shade, and the voice was heard at last by the church from him who sat on the throne. I know thy works and how thou hast said, I am rich and hast not known that thou art naked, poor and blind and wretched before my face.

Therefore, from my presence cast I thee out and blot thy name from it. I say that poem is true, too true. I'm not applying it to everyone in this room here, but in general, the history of the Christian church.

And by saying that, I'm not linking ourselves with all those things that we wouldn't call the Christian church. I'm just saying the world has its effect and it's still after the church. And he still wants to laugh in his sleeve.

So now what do we mean by plain Christians? Titus 3.8 says, this is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. That those that have believed in God should have in their heart a desire and a determination to maintain something in their Christian life.

That is, good works that are profitable unto men. Titus 3.14 says, and let ours, meaning our people, the Christian people, let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, sounds like a practical life, that they be not unfruitful. Looking for ways to be fruitful, meaning there's something to show for my life everywhere I spend it.

It's fruitful. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with the brodered hair, or the gold or pearls or costly array. That's why women are not encouraged to deck themselves, is because it's vanity.

It's vain. Rather, let their outward adornment be that which is plain and simple, and rather adorn themselves, as the Bible says here, with good works. What is it that makes women beautiful? Does the Bible say? How good are they? How exercised are they in good works? Are there good words that come out of their mouth? Do they have a testimony of good works? Are they ready to serve? That's what makes a woman beautiful in God's eyes.

Good works are the beauty and adornment of the Christian life. No flair, no show, no ostentation. Just plain, solid, profitable good works.

A meek and quiet spirit is an ornament that is prized by God and men, in men and women. I think Scripture speaks to women specifically because they have a weakness in that area, but I think it's good for us men to listen in on what God is saying to women. That gentle and quiet spirits are precious to God.

Our Gospel is plain and simple. Believe in Jesus Christ and do good. Plain as opposed to vain has to do with a desire to fill my life with that which will last for eternity and in life and in the great judgment will bear fruit and have something to show for my life.

Living my life for practical, eternal purposes which do good in the world. That is what I'd like to define plain as. A plain life is a life that says I want my life to matter everywhere I use it.

I want something to show for my life everywhere. That is plain Christianity. Now let me say what some of you have been waiting for.

This affects your clothing. Is that ok? Did I say that this morning? This affects your clothing. But I'd ask you this morning when we talk about plainness and clothing, can we examine the effect of clothing, plainness on clothing and define it by the definition that we're using here rather than according to the principle of plain Christianity, a Christianity of good works and wanting my life to be of value and purposeful.

Can we examine the whole subject of clothing from that perspective of plainness rather than say an Amish or a Ware Mennonite or a some of your cultic groups that identify with their group by their clothing. Their clothing is the distinctive that makes them part of that group. I don't know how many times I've heard groups defined as, oh, they're the ones with the stripe on their wheel or they're the ones that they don't have strings maybe on their bonnets.

And there are distinctives about clothing that make people distinct to a certain group. It's a link between them and the people, group that they're in. But, if we can this morning, I'd like to say, can we not talk about plain Christians according to that? Can we talk about plain Christians according to just a plain Christianity? A Christianity that says, I want everything in my life to matter at the throne of God.

I don't want anything to burn up in 1 Corinthians 3. I want everything to be left. I want to gain everything that I'm doing here up there. I believe that plain is a view of life that includes but encompasses more than clothing and vehicles.

You hear that? Plain doesn't just mean I wear a certain clothing or I drive a certain vehicle. Is there any spiritual benefit to being plain? Think about it. Is there any spiritual benefit to being plain? And I mean in the Lancaster County terminology.

Well, you can't get the right answer to that question until you answer this question. Is there any spiritual danger in being vain? Is there any spiritual danger in being vain? Spending your life purposelessly. Is that a spiritual danger? Absolutely.

That world will get a hook in your flesh and pull you right into the world. You'll go through the fire and it'll all be burned up. And you'll have a few coins left.

A piece of gold or a silver here. Is there any spiritual benefit to being plain? Yes. If it's in opposition to the vanity of the world.

Can a woman or a man be vain about being plain? Brothers and sisters, the heart of this issue is the issue of the heart. God is the discerner of the heart. And isn't that the real question for all of us this morning? We should all ask ourselves this question.

Who wants to get to heaven and have your works burned up? It doesn't matter if you can fool me or fool the rest of the congregation or fool the whole community of what benefit it is to your soul if your whole life is a bubble at the day of judgment. So I think every one of us needs to sit in our chair without the neighbor and without thinking of that person over there or this person next to me. And we need to examine what is our life going to be like? Because I can guarantee every man, woman and child in this room, you will stand in front of the judgment seat of Jesus Christ and every work you have done from A to Z will be tried by fire according to the Word of God.

According to the Word of God. And don't we want our works to last? Don't we want to get to the end of the fire and the examination is over and all that is worthless is taken away? Don't we want a treasure in heaven? Or do we think that's proud? Ask ourselves this. Am I exercising pure religion in the sight of God the Father? James 1.27. Anybody know what pure religion is in James 1.27? That's right.

Helping those that are in need. Sounds like doing good, doesn't it? And keeping ourselves unspotted. Do I have a fear of being spotted by the vanity of the world? True, holy plainness flows from this principle.

And I think some of the Amish and the winger and the other old order groups, I think some of them have it. You know, as I've known many of those people, some of them really do what they do because they don't want to be part of the world. It's not just a church thing or I was baptized here or whatever.

I'm not casting stones at those. Like you said, David, I think there are those there who have a true faith in Christ. Was John Baptist plain? Was he plain? Very plain.

His clothes were plain. His food was plain. His speech was plain.

And his purpose was plain. Everything about the man was plain. Well, what made it plain, defined plain in John Baptist's life? He had one purpose in life.

Make ye straight the way of the Lord. And he must increase and I must decrease. That was John Baptist's life and everything about his life fit that purpose.

And I say John Baptist was plain. Was Jesus plain? Was Jesus plain? And in what way? He always did that which pleased my Father. I only say that which I hear my Father say.

In Luke 12.50, he said, I have a baptism to be baptized with and I am straightened until it is accomplished. Everything in his life pointed to the cross. Everything he did, everything he said, all his purposes was the cross.

Did his clothing reflect it? As far as I know, he only had one set of clothing and it was taken from him at the cross. Was he like an Assyrian? Anybody think Jesus was like an Assyrian? Robed in purple. Majestic.

A prince. Did he have form or comeliness that we should look upon him? No, Isaiah 53.2 says, He shall grow up before him like a tender plant. He hath no form nor comeliness and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He didn't wear the latest fashion in seamless robes. It was probably woven for him by some woman who loved him and saw he had need and gave him his clothing. I hope I'm defining it.

I hope I can change our definition of plain Christianity this morning. You know, I have no problem being known as one of the plain people, but it sure doesn't mean what Lancaster County says plain people are. I

want it to be deeper than what most people using that term mean.

We want to be more than just plain, meaning we're suspenders and solid colors and our vehicles have to be ten years or older. I want to be plain because my purpose is that everything in my life points to eternity. Everything in my life is for the purpose of glorifying Christ.

A person's good look and vain show has value and meaning among other vain persons who value that emptiness. But what about the solid values of well-developed character? Let's talk about the real values of life. How about someone who doesn't look like he's much, but when you get to know him, there's a solid character there, well-developed.

You know, I know some handicapped people that I admire. You know, they have been trained well in their home. They have such a sweet attitude, such a blessing.

What about the solid value of learning and wisdom? The development of patient endurance and self-denial? Many times these things hide under a drab garb. Or other things about a person's life. Einstein did not look like an intelligent man, if you've ever seen pictures of Einstein.

He didn't care much for his outward appearance, but he was brilliant. And I'm not putting him on a pedestal as a Christian example. Just saying, many times, true values that have purpose and have a benefit are hidden by the outward man.

The development of patience and endurance and self-denial, I mean, those are disciplines of life that are invaluable in the world and in heaven. The ability to maintain an awareness of God in a God-denying world, that's something you can't see unless you know a person for it. In the realities of life and eternity, those who make a vain show often prove worthless in the real necessities of life.

Those that focus on the outer man often times are devoid on the inner man. Let's be people who focus on the inner man and there's a beauty, God says, that comes out of that inner man that will manifest on the outside. Show me a plain person, and I mean plain by Lancaster County definitions, who beneath a drab clothing hides a shining, brilliant character and a good understanding and a developed, skillful ability to do the good thing that needs to be done, and I will show you a person that will prosper in this world and in the judgment.

And I'm not negating the blood of Christ by saying that. I'm just speaking of plain, purposeful life as opposed to the vain life of the world. With this as a definition, I believe that the will of God is that we all be plain Christians in a vain world.

That's my conclusion. Plain Christians do not wear uniforms across the world. This principle of keeping oneself unspotted by the world, by the vain world, finds its expression in many different ways, and one who has this principle can identify with others who share the same principle, even though it manifests in a different expression in different places.

For instance, a plain Haitian will be different than a plain American. You follow? A plain Haitian who has this principle, I want my life to matter. Everything I do will manifest differently than an American.

Someone coming from an Amish background, or a Hutterite background, or a Baptist background. And I realize I'm on thin ice this morning. But hear me in relation to this principle.

I think we can say without justifying the shortcomings of those backgrounds, that there are those from every background that get this principle. God, I want my life, every part of it to matter. And it manifests differently, depending on your background.

But it does manifest. The core of the issue is this. Is your religion real? Is your religion real? Are you keeping yourself from the spot of the world? Is that what's motivating you? Is that the driving motive for what you're doing? God, I want to get to the end of my life with a clean shirt.

I want to get to the end of my life with a white robe, no spot. And I want to stand in judgment and not lose anything. I think we can simply ask the question, are you a plain Christian in a vain world? Ask yourself that question.

Am I really plain? Is that what motivates me? 1 John 2.17 says, And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof. But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. That's what God thinks of the world.

That's what God says why we shouldn't be attached to the world. It's passing away. Why would you go follow after it? It'll have no lasting benefit to you in eternity if you chase the world.

It's vain. It's passing away. Don't love it.

Don't be attached to it. Luke 14.26 says, If any man come to Me, and he hate not his father, and his mother, and his wife, and his children, and his brethren, and his sister, yes, and his own life also. It cannot be my desire.

Unless there is an attitude of my life that says, my life is dead. My desires are dead. I want everything I do to last in 1 Corinthians 3.11. Jesus says, You can't be my disciple with that attitude.

If you don't have this attitude, yea, even my own life, you cannot be my disciple. Matthew 6.20 says, But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, where thieves do not break through nor steal. And there's treasures, gold, silver, precious stones, that will stand the fire.

My message this morning is simply to exhort each one of us to examine our own lives as to whether we are plain or vain. Whether we are living our lives for those things that will profit our eternal soul in the day of fire, or will our work be burned up. May the Lord Jesus use these words in our hearts to edify us and to make us stand before Him with joy.

God bless you all. Thank you, Brother David. I'd like to give a hearty amen to that message and believe that it needs to be a deeply rooted guiding principle settled deeply upon our heart in these days.

If it's not, which is evident by the thousands in this county, it is soon gone and exchanged for something that is worldly, vain, and foolish. Last Monday was Labor Day and we spent our time in Holmes County, Ohio. Went out Sunday after church, as you remember, and spent the time there with our two dear, kind of adopted children, families, the Darvin Hossetters and Paul Hershbergers.

And just had a wonderful time where many of these principles were so exemplified by those children that blessed my wife and I tremendously there. The way the girls served in such humble and godly ways and brought us a drink of water or offered us a cup of coffee in just such a beautiful way. But on Monday, we usually do something together and the suggestion came up to go to Dover, just out 39 there, 77.

There's a little town of Dover there and it has a worthier museum. And I was totally amazed. I had seen the signs there for 40-some years when my wife and I lived in Minerva and we were back and forth in Holmes County a lot.

We used to see this sign, worthier museum, and we thought at different times, I like museums, and we would be either on our way home or on our way to church or a wedding or something in Holmes County and visiting friends, so we never stopped. But on Monday, we decided to go see this thing and here was an old man that died now and it's the second and third generation is working there and he was an unusually gifted man beyond anything that I'd ever seen in his ability to carve. He had a second-grade education.

He was a total dropout, total misfit as far as education is concerned. But he met an old tramp there in Holmes County that was walking the road and the man showed him, well, he had picked up a pocket knife while walking through a dusty lane in a field that he found and he got this thing and opened it up and looked at it a little bit as a young boy, maybe, I don't know, 10, 12, 13. But then he sat on the bench there in Holmes County beside a road walker, a tramp, and the man was a whittler and he showed him how to whittle on a piece of wood and that got him started and he developed this gift that is just totally mind-blowing.

If you ever have an opportunity to stop by there and take your family in there to see that, it's well worth the while. But he began to carve various things on wood and he would take, like he would take hinging pliers and he would do that all by cuts. There was no hinge and no pin or nothing but these pliers could pinch your finger and everything all made out of a stick and he made that thing and carved it and cut it that it would open and close and had two jaws and everything.

He was able, so well able to do that that they got him on a television show one time and he was able, at his fastest, he carved one of those pliers from a stick of wood in seven and a half seconds. But what his art was, was designing steam engines and carving out steam engines. He would take steam engines, model steam engines and the tender, he hated diesels, he thought they were ugly and so he stuck to steam all his life and he made these replica steam engines and he took the tusks of elephants and carved out the pipes and put all the rivets around the boiler, thousands of rivets in some of that and he carved the wheels and the pistons and everything, the mechanism of the old steam locomotive, workable.

The steam, the wheels would turn, the pistons would go back and forth and everything and some of them were the thinness of a lead of a pencil and the rivets would have been probably as small or smaller than the point of a pen and he would carve thousands of them and drill little holes and stick them in there and he would take a big tube, a big chunk of log and carve the main boiler and then he put all this ivory made from the tusks of elephants and he wouldn't use poached animals. There was a difference in the tusk if the ivory was poached or if it was a natural death. It had a different coating and he was careful not to use the poached ivory and he had that all imported and brought in and my point is this, even though I could go on and on a while and some of the things he did, but one of his masterpieces was the New York Central main engine and then also the big western big boy which was the largest steam locomotive ever made in the 1940s that was able to haul the 150 cars over the Sierra Nevada mountains unaided without any pushers or other pullers and that thing was huge, a huge thing like that with the 4884 wheel underneath and then the big tender.

But anyway, he carved the New York Central and somebody in New York got a hold of this thing and said, we want you in New York. He debated a while. I mean, you ought to see the way this man lived.

He raised five children in a house in a kitchen that none of us would be satisfied with. It was just a small little house there in Dover and you ought to see his stove and nothing else mattered in life except to sit in a little shop that would fit from here to the end of the platform was his shop with a couple of windows in it and he sat there at a bench in his tools and did all those things. And then New York Central got a hold of him and they offered him a tremendous opportunity to come to New York City and to carve the various parts of the railroad of the New York Central for him.

Well, he went up there and I don't know the story but he took his wife and children and all that and he began to carve for the New York Central and he carved those beautiful engines and tenders and cars and he carved the Lincoln funeral train which was long and he had the engines and three cars for the dignitaries and the family and then Lincoln's body lying in a coffin inside with a door locked to it, the windows. You could see the body lying in the coffin and a key that would open the door to let you go into that little room all in a little model, Lincoln's funeral train from one end to the other. But anyway then, they offered him a great job and a great salary and all that but he hated New York City and he said no to the whole thing and went back to Dover, Ohio to his little house and his little shop and even at 70-some years of age he never became a wealthy man.

His carvings are priceless and what little got into the hands of other people I've donated back and they're in his museum. He never sold them even though they were worth tens of thousands of dollars that people would pay for them today and in his 70s and maybe close to 80 he was still carving steam engines. He actually took the railroad from its most original crude little boiler with a outside, standing outside, a man on it you know the first steam engine in Pennsylvania or in the United States and took it all the way to the last one and he just made one after the other and he did a lot of that one in his 70s.

But here was a man who said no to the lure of money and to the fame and popularity and riches, the whole thing. What the man could have got, it's hard to be told. And he lived his simple life and his wife had her simple garden and they lived off of that and you can tour his house too and an old flower garden there.

They actually have his original grapevine that is now 70 years old that you can still sit under on a bench and enjoy the shade of the grape leaves there so that the sun doesn't beat out on you out there in the garden. But I just want to give that. The man lived by conviction without much education but God had so gifted him to be able to do that one thing and he did it not for human glory, not for human fame, not for human riches or worldly riches but just it was a gift God gave him and he did it.

And I realize that that doesn't have the heavy spiritual ending to it that maybe we would like to see in general. I agree with that. But just the fact that he was able to say no to the allurements of the world and do his thing that God had gifted him and I think all of us have that choice the same way.

God has gifted us things that we can do to God's glory. They're not sinful. They're not wicked.

They're not vain. And we can raise a godly family. We can preach the Gospel.

We can in a simple way go and do missionary work. And we can do good to all men in so many opportunities that God gives us to do that to maintain good works. Be very careful to maintain them like the Bible says.

And can do all that without ever being spotted by this vain world. So may God help us this morning to once again push that reset button and put our values where they belong and where they'll count in that judgment day. I think one of the greatest joys probably and anticipations that we can have is to stand there and hear the words Come Thou, blessed of the Lord, and enter Thou into the joy of the Lord.

What a day that will be. And to have the assurance of it now in this life by living according to God's holy Word and submitting ourselves to the great plan of God. Also appreciated the testimonies given by Brother Ephraim and Sister Salome.

May God truly bless you as you continue to find your way in His fellowship. And we already say even in these three years or however many two or so that you're living here that you have been a great contribution we believe to the church. The way you were able to handle death and all that was a testimony to many disappointments and tribulations.

And I know in the last week here and what we experienced here in the building that was a challenge to us to be able to be joyful in tribulation. And we had our lives. We had our wives.

We had our church brothers, our sisters. Nobody lost their life here even though some did. Here in the county through foolish things that were done to take risks and so on.

Yet God spared us all of those things. Yesterday was just such a great joy to see what all was accomplished and all the help you all gave us. And then meet with the brothers in the afternoon for about four hours or more in a very, very enjoyable conversation where we went back over the vision and purpose for which we are here at African Christian Fellowship and why we left where we were and chose to serve God according to how we understood the truth of the Scripture.

And we give all glory to Him for that. So maybe there are other testimonies. I know the hour is late, but we have a fellowship meal and we're just going to stay here anyhow for the most of us.

So anyone else have a testimony you want to share yet? Okay. Up here, Brother Dean. Over here, Brother Rob.

Yes. Mark. I do want to bless Brother David for the message.

Also, Brother Dave, the opening. I did appreciate it very much. It was a good way of directing our hearts.

And I know without love, 1 Corinthians 13 just reduces everything to a clanging cymbal. I don't know if that's the exact words. But I also wanted to just confess I am too focused on my personal appearance.

I am really convicted by what Brother David brought up. And there's too much of a draw I have towards the mirror. I want to repent of that and just be focused on my laying up treasures, being filled with Him.

It's making a difference here for eternity. I just want to say that's my heart. May God help me.

Brother Mark. Amen. Okay, up here in the front.

Maybe catch Brother Ron first and then Brother Dean. Yes, amen to both messages. I really appreciated Brother Dave's opening about loving one another, loving God with all our heart and loving one another and that being the real test of a Christian.

And Brother David's message, I certainly want to be a plain Christian. I don't want to be vain. I don't want my works to be burned up at the end, but I want to have lasting works.

And I was reflecting how the two messages, there was a link there. There was a real, they connected. They went well together.

And when in the main message we heard about from the book of James how faith without works is dead. It's vain. If we profess to have faith, but we don't have works, our faith is vain.

It's vanity. And how in the opening Brother Dave was saying, we can really know if we're Christians, how do we know loving God and loving one another. So love for one another and for God is the way that we show that.

And I was just reflecting, are we able to do that? And how well are we able to do that? And even with those that maybe we don't agree with. Even those that we might have difficulty with. If I can say even those who have recently left our fellowship, what is our attitude towards them? What is our heart towards them? Are we able to still love them? Are we able to forgive them? How do we speak about them? Those kind of things put shoe leather to the fact of saying that we love God and we love one another.

So that would be something that could be a challenge to us. In 1 Corinthians 13 it says, even if we give our bodies to be burned, but have not love, then it doesn't profit us anything. It's vain.

It's a vanity. So may we take these words to heart from God's Word that we have heard preached today and apply them to our lives and I don't think any of us wants to have our works burned up at the end. We want them to last.

And so may all of us apply these things to our hearts to have true love for God and true love for one another in these areas. Amen. Amen.

Thank you, Ron. Dean. First of all, I want to say to Brother Ephraim, he mentioned in his testimony of which I was very ministered to, Brother, also.

He said, if we have any gifts, I want to assure him it's not if. God has granted to each one of us several as He will and I don't think He has passed any by there if we are faithful to Him. He will use us.

With Brother Dave's message, one of the things that I was pondering as a way to love one another, Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. And someone has said that it means to see God in our circumstances and see God in one another. And I was reminded while Dave was sharing that here some time ago, he was talking to me and he was struggling with something that someone said and I was trying to remember who he was even talking about or what he was saying.

But then in the middle of that conversation he was reminded of a flower that someone gave his wife like four or five months ago in the early spring and she just had a birthday and on the day of her birthday that flower bloomed its first flower and he was so blessed by that and he was seeing God in that. And I thought that's seeing God in our circumstances. And that really ministered to me and I was really touched by that.

I couldn't remember much about the rest of our conversation but I remembered that and it really made an effect on me. And then the point that I'm trying to make in that is that in Peter it says we're to love the

brethren with a pure heart. And how to make that practical in my life, I believe one of the ways then is to see God in them.

We need to see God in each other. And that when we're dealing with one another in whatever dealings whether we're agreeing or disagreeing with each other or whatever, to love our brother with a pure heart is to see God in them. And when we see God in each other we're not going to be quick to criticize.

We're not going to be quick to find fault. We're not going to be quick to speak evil of them or be backbiting as the Scripture talks about. And so I was challenged to see God in my brothers this morning there at that opening.

And then with the Brother David's message here that ministered a lot to my heart and I have a lot of things to ponder about the purpose of my life but he mentioned what makes a woman beautiful is her good works. And my mind was flooded with the beauty that I saw in my wife before I married her in that her life was full of serving others. And I could hardly go even though we were a big church at that time and hardly knew her personally had hardly had more than two or three conversations with her in the three, four, five years it was there that we would have been in the same church in the same youth group basically.

I didn't know her well personally but I saw how beautiful she was by all of the good works that she performed. Her life seemed to be two or three lives because every home I got into they were speaking her praises how she came in and cleaned their house washed their clothes picked their green beans washed their dishes, whatever. It seemed like she was serving everywhere and now that I'm one of the beneficiaries of that I continue to see her beauty and not by putting on ornaments or painting herself up or whatever but by her good works.

And I just want to encourage the young people in that that if you want to be beautiful decorate your life with abandonment to others and to God. And I one time admonished the young people to take a fast from music. Not listening to music but making your own music.

Well, one way to make this message practical I think would be to go on a mirror fast a 40 day mirror fast. Amen. Alright, well, thank you.

Oh, here's Brother Levi. I can just say it was so good to be here this morning to be reminded. I can say amen to everything.

And I just want to especially bless the brother for coming out as boldly as he did. You know, you can get up there in the pulpit and say the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh the pride of life is not of the world it's not of the Father but it's of the world. Everybody, amen, amen.

When you start making applications like this, Brother Dave did they say, legalism, legalism. You know, I come to the point people call me legalist and I say, yeah, you're right, I'm a legalist. I try to do everything as legal as I can.

I guess I am a legalist. One guy woke up to me one time and he just I went to a Billy Graham crusade and this guy woke up to me and he says, you know, what do you remind me of? And I said, no. I said, what do I remind you of? He said, you remind me of a wolf in sheep's clothes.

I said, you say I remind you of a wolf in sheep's clothes? He said, yes. I said, now could you tell me what to do? Should I get rid of the wolf or should I get rid of the sheep's clothes? He didn't know what to say

anymore. But you know nowadays in fact you know, we talk a lot of times that was in the Old Testament and this is in the New Testament.

What did Paul mean when he said to Timothy attempt thyself to reading? What was he supposed to read? And he says thou hast known the Holy Scriptures from thy youth which are able to make thee wise unto salvation. And he says all Scripture is given by inspiration for what? Profitable for doctrine for correction that the men of God might be surely furnished unto all good works. And if we understand properly you know, a lot of people say I talk about Jesus when I pray after all Jesus died to save us from sin I agree on that don't get me wrong.

But he did more than that. He did he rose and resurrected went to heaven and he sends back the Holy Spirit into our heart to give us a new heart that we can erase those laws upon our heart that we're able to live that for Jesus Christ. In other words this idea of just in other words Jesus died for us too many people think of the modern day religion Oh, Jesus died just to pay for all of our sins and then to go on living in sin.

That's plain false doctrine. He did come more than that. He came to give us the Holy Spirit that we can live the word of God and it comes down to one boiling thing which was mentioned today.

Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart all thy mind all thy soul as frank and to love your neighbor as yourself. That is the gospel in a nutshell.

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