

Eternity Begins Now

by Sandeep Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the eternal concepts of unworthiness, righteousness in Christ, and adoration of Jesus. It challenges listeners to embrace their eternal unworthiness, find their worth in the righteousness of Christ, and commit to being attached to Jesus, following Him wherever He goes for all eternity.

Scripture: Colossians 2:13, Luke 18:9, Revelation 14:1, Romans 3:21, Philippians 3:7

Topics: "Eternal Worth", "Righteousness in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

What I wanted to share today, dear family, was about things that will last forever and ever. There's a word that we use in the Bible, there's a word we use, we often hear it in church, it's called eternity. And I wonder if you have thought about how long eternity is.

We have lived, maybe some of you children, I wonder what you think of when you think about eternity. How long have you lived? Some of you may have just lived for about 10 years. And it can feel like a long time, it can feel like a long time ago that you actually were in first grade.

And I'm 46 years old, almost 46 years old. That can feel four times as much as somebody who's been 10 years old has been living. My dad is 80 years old.

That's almost twice as long as I've been alive. Adam lived for almost 1000 years. That's a long time.

Jesus lived 2000 years ago. 10 years is nothing compared to that. And there's so many pictures you can use to think about how long it is.

You can think about a long, small piece of space between your fingers. And that could be as long as we are living. And Adam just lived a little bit longer than that compared to eternity.

But the truth is that we are going to spend eternity with God. We're going to spend eternity, which is forever and ever. And I wonder what you think about eternity is going to look like what we're going to take with us.

Children, you have things that are very important to you. Maybe it's toys, maybe it's dolls, maybe it's Legos. And as we grow up, the things change, but we all have things that are very precious to us.

For some of us, it's our houses. For some of us, it's our cars. For some of us, it's our careers.

But we're not taking any of that to eternity with us. We know that. But it's good for us to think about what is going to last for all eternity and to say, what am I going to take with me? What is most important to you right now? For some of you and children, it may be your grades.

It may be what college you're going to get to. It's maybe a job that you're going to have. It may be so important to you.

It may be so worth it that you get the nice job, but you get into the right college, you get the right grades. And as we grow up and we get married or we want to get married, it could be, okay, I hope I get a good wife. And then I hope I have children.

And I hope that those children grow up to fear God. And I hope my children are educated and don't have too many problems fitting into this world. And we have so many things that define us and control us, but they're not going to last for all eternity.

And I wonder what we think about are the things that are going to last for all eternity. What are we going to take with us? I wanted to share three things that I want to remind myself that I'm going to take to eternity with me. And I don't know if we think about it in these terms, but it's important for us to remember, there are going to be things that we're going to take with us for all eternity.

And to remember that preparing ourselves for that now, but it's not going to change once we get to eternity. And the first word that I don't know if we remember about ourselves is the word unworthy. And I don't know how many of us think that we're unworthy right now.

And I don't know how many of us think that we'll be unworthy five years from now, 10 years from now, a hundred years from now, for all eternity, for the rest of our lives, but for all eternity, even after we go to heaven, after all our troubles go away. I wonder if we have embraced the fact that we will be eternally unworthy. And there are three things that I want to say we will take to heaven with us.

So I want to show you all three so that you can see all three of the things that I want to share about today. These are the three things that we will be taking to eternity with us. We'll be eternally unworthy.

We'll be eternally righteous in Christ. And we'll be eternally adoring of Jesus Christ. And I want to first start with that first word, eternally unworthy.

I don't know if we think that we'll be eternally unworthy because we first, maybe for the children too, we have to understand what that word worthy means or unworthy means. We think about worthy and you think about that word worth. We go to a store.

How much is that Lego set worth? How much money do I need to pay to get that thing so that that Lego set can be mine? And we have so many things that define worth for us. Many societies will tell us that money tells you how worthy you are. The more money you have, then you can feel good and look good.

The business world could tell me it's my career or my job accomplishments. The social world will tell me it could be my looks or how popular I am. It could be my house.

It could be my children, how good they are behind all of those things. I have all of us asking myself, what makes me worthy for the children? How do you know what makes you worthy? What makes you feel good about yourself when you accomplish something, when you get something for your birthday, when you get presents, that's what makes you feel good. Well, that is going to keep on for the rest of our lives.

We're going to have different things that we're always going to remember about ourselves that we're going to say, this is what gives us worth. And I wonder if we're constantly reminding ourselves that a basic truth that God is teaching us in scripture is that we are unworthy. So we need to receive Jesus Christ.

But I don't know if we keep reminding ourselves that we'll always be unworthy. And I thought about eternity. The earth, Adam man has existed for 6,000 years.

We have these questions about how much, how long it is 1 million years or 1 billion years. Imagine your life 1 billion years from now, some things will be very different. We'll have new bodies.

We will see Jesus face to face. But one thing that will not change for sure is that we'll still be unworthy. And we will always see that Jesus is the only one who's worthy.

Jesus is the only one who will always be worthy, will only be worthy. And that shift happens when we're born again. And it often, it's so important for us to keep reminding ourselves that to be born again is not a decision, but it's a lifestyle.

And so for us, as we teach the children, children that you need to be born again, we use different words to explain what that means. One thing that to be born again means is to say, Lord Jesus, I am not worthy. There's nothing in my life that is worthy of you, worthy to be with God, worthy to talk to God.

And fundamentally, when we are born again, we're saying, Lord, we are not worthy. You alone are worthy. Some of us have been Christians for years.

And I wonder if we still recognize our total unworthiness before God. That's where the word worship also comes from. Worthiness and what are you going to worship is what you think is worthy.

And if we have any sense of worthiness in ourselves, we are tempted and will be driven to worship that. If we think more money is what is really worthy and gives us worth, we're going to run after money. And if we really think that Jesus is the only one that is worthy, that has worth, we will run after Jesus.

And I've noticed in myself that I have to keep reminding myself that I am totally unworthy and that it's because I have some worth in myself, my selfishness, that is what robs God of his worship. And if I really saw that I was totally unworthy, worship will come very easily. And I will struggle to worship God in heaven if I still think I'm at all worthy.

A billion years from now, I will still be completely unworthy. I want to show you this verse in Colossians chapter three, Colossians chapter three, verse 13 through 15. It says about Colossians chapter two, I'm sorry, Colossians chapter two, verse 13 through 15.

It talks about what Jesus did. Colossians chapter two, verse 13 through 15. When you were dead in your transgressions, he made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions and having canceled out the debt of decrees against us.

He took it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. And here's the verse, verse 15 that I wanted to underline. When he had disarmed the rulers and authorities, he made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through him.

That's the right, when he disarmed the rulers and authorities, he made a public display of them. And I don't know if we have seen that parade that happened. I don't know if we have witnessed that parade ourselves personally.

I want to share a picture of back in the day, what Paul was referring to. This is a picture of a Roman triumph, the Roman person coming home after a victory. And there's a parade that has been happening for him.

And that's a picture of what Paul had in mind when he said he rode in triumphantly and he made a public display of all his enemies. And what I saw was that the Lord was telling me, where are you in this picture? If you look at this picture, we can see in this picture that that person raising the sword over here is a picture of Jesus. But where am I in this picture? And the first thing that I have to remember is that that's where I am.

And I don't think this picture does it justice, because I think this picture of this enemy that has been conquered still looks too good. God has completely defeated this enemy and has made a parade of that. That is the enemy of Jesus.

My selfish will. And I used to read this verse and I used to say, Lord, there was a parade that happened for all the rulers that were enemies of you. And I used to think about the devil.

And I used to think about the parade that happened when Jesus died on the cross and where the devil and all his forces were paraded naked, completely defeated. And I love to clap. And I loved to say amen to that picture.

But when I say that I am unworthy, what it means is that I have no worth and that my selfish will is the number one enemy of Jesus. My selfish will is the number one enemy of Jesus. And I was picturing it this way, that one million years, one billion years after today, there may be another parade in heaven.

There may be a fresh parade in heaven where Jesus rides down the streets of the new heaven on the new earth and all his enemies are publicly shamed just to remind all of us of what Jesus did. And in that parade, I'm going to be in that parade. My old selfish will is going to be in that parade because he is an enemy of Jesus Christ and he's the number one enemy of Jesus.

And what that meant for me was, Lord, I want to always applaud for that parade that is happening. That any day, Lord Jesus, there can be a parade that happens in heaven or on this earth. And the person who should be in that parade as being unworthy is me.

And not only that, I should be the lead person in the parade. Out of all the people who should be paraded, all the enemies are lined up. I'm the number one person who should be in that parade.

And I could see that in that sense, I could understand what Paul was saying when he said, I'm the foremost of all the sinners. I'm the first of all the sinners. Yes, there are so many of sin.

None are righteous. All are unworthy. But if you want to put them all in a line, put me first.

Let me have the number one role in terms of enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ, who Jesus had to die for, who Jesus conquered. And let that parade happen every day. All kinds of evil dictators, cruel people who kill millions are all in that parade of enemies.

But from my view, from how I see, it was my selfishness that needs to be number one. And for me to say, I am unworthy is for me to say, Lord Jesus, bring him that old selfish will of mine and put him in the very front. He is the one who's done the most damage.

He's the one who's hurting your cause the from everything that I can see is my selfish will. So Lord Jesus, I want this parade to happen every single day in my life. And it's easy to see myself in Christ.

It's easy to see myself adoring Jesus and applauding Jesus as God shows the devil defeated. But I want to see myself totally unworthy, eternally unworthy. For all eternity, there's going to be a public shaming and Jesus will be parading all his enemies.

I'm going to be eternally unworthy. You know, children's stories, you say you lived happily ever after. You lived happily forever and ever.

That's what eternity is. And the story, the beautiful story of Jesus in which we can live happily ever after is as we see our eternal unworthiness. There is nothing I can do today or for the next billion years that will ever make me worthy.

The next thing is that I am totally righteous in Christ. I don't know if we value the word righteous properly, but the Bible says in Romans chapter three, there's no one righteous, not even one. And we are totally unworthy.

But in addition to our unworthiness, I must see that in Christ, I am totally righteous and I see righteousness as the currency and the worthiness in heaven. That's the only thing that has glory is one that is righteous and that I am totally unrighteous, but I'm clothed in the righteousness of Christ. So I don't have to hang my head in shame, even though I see my old self being paraded, unworthy, defeated by the cross of Christ every day.

And I must applaud that unworthiness. There's no reason for me to hang my head in shame because the gospel is also that I am totally righteous in Christ. I'm reminded of the story of the Pharisee and the publican in Luke chapter 18.

And I don't know, I've said this before, but I don't know if as we're telling the story, we end the story too soon. You can turn there. Luke chapter 18 verses nine through 14 is the story, but it talks about a Pharisee and a publican and two different ways in which they pray.

And the Pharisee is comparing himself to the publican and says, thank you God that I'm not like that other person is so bad in so many different ways. Now the publican in verse 13 is beating his breast and saying, God, I'm unworthy. I'm totally unworthy.

The parade is happening and that's who I am in the front of the line. And that is that first statement, but that's not the end of the story. And God doesn't want us to just be paraded, naked, shamed, and that being the end of the story.

Now that's where the story begins, but the rest of the story is also that we are righteous in Christ. As this verse tells you in Luke chapter 18 verse 14, I tell you, this man went to his house justified. That is what that word justified means totally righteous.

And if I were to show you this picture it really should be showing you a picture of a person naked. That's what unworthy means completely shamed, but righteous God says completely cloned. So I don't need to have any more shame anymore.

And again, eternally righteous in Christ means for all eternity, every day I will wake up and I will see that the parade is happening for all eternity, a billion years from now, but a billion years from now, I will be totally righteous in Christ. And I had this picture in my mind of every day waking up in heaven and putting on the robe of righteousness and that there's an angel as I come out of my door in heaven who inspects the robe to see if any of my own righteousness has slipped in. Maybe after a million years of being with Jesus, maybe after 10 million years of Jesus, I start to think I'm just a little bit righteous and I'm immediately kicked out of heaven because for all eternity, my only righteousness will be Jesus.

And it's easy to think about a billion years from now and say, well, I'm sure that'd be true, but I have to inspect my garments today. I don't know if we are willing to see the parade today as a practice for the next billion years. Nothing's going to change about that.

We're going to take that to heaven and it'll be true that we're totally unworthy a billion years from today. The question is, will I rehearse that scene today where the parade is happening today, where Jesus rides triumphantly and I look for myself and I see myself totally unworthy and I say, bring him to the front of the line. Let nothing cover his nakedness because he deserves to be completely shamed.

In addition to that, I see then Christ offering me the total robe of righteousness. I see that in Paul's life too. I want to show you this passage in Luke, sorry, in Romans chapter three, verse 24.

Romans is a story of how we grow in Christ. Romans one tells us how we are all sinners. Romans two tells us even though we are religious, even though we try to follow God, we're still sinners.

And he tells us at the end of Romans chapter three, verse 21 to 22, 23, he says, everybody has sinned. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But in Romans chapter three, verse 21, he says, we get to be righteous through Christ, through faith in Christ.

We get to be righteous. And Paul was describing, I'm sure his own life, how he began his life righteous in Christ. There was no other hope of righteousness except that Jesus and his righteousness could cover him completely.

That's the beginning of our Christian life. We're completely naked and God's righteousness covers us completely. Some of us, most of us, maybe all of us who have been born again, it was easy for us to embrace that truth at the beginning of our lives, at the beginning of our Christian life.

But now I want to show you Philippians chapter three. And Philippians chapter three is written near the end of Paul's life. And he's talking now his testimony after many years of first experiencing and putting on the righteousness of Christ on the Damascus road.

Many years later, many missionary travels later. Now Paul is saying, now I want to tell you my testimony and my hope. Years after being a Christian, it started what I talk about in Romans chapter three, about me

having no hope with all of my righteousness.

They're all being like filthy rags, but it was the righteousness of Christ. Now in Philippians three decades later, tens of years later, he says in verse seven, I've done many things. I've done many things that will gain.

I've done many things for the cause of Christ, but I count them all as loss. In verse eight, I counted all as loss just in seeing verse nine, so that I might have a righteousness that comes on the basis of faith. It's that same thing that he said back in Romans chapter three, verse 21, which is that was the thing that I had in the very beginning of my life.

Now, decades later, I haven't changed. Nothing has changed. I've done a lot of things for God.

I've gone to different countries. I've been beaten up. I've been in jail.

I am in jail right now for the case sake of Christ, but nothing has changed. I am still seeking the righteousness of God that comes from faith. And if you ask Paul now, 2,000 years later, he says, look, a lot of things have changed.

I'm in the presence of God, but I'm still completely unworthy. And I still have the righteousness of Christ that covers me completely. And I still seek to be found in him totally righteous in Christ.

And I want to keep saying totally righteous in Christ because I don't want us to ever think that even though that righteousness of Christ is ours, that we ever think that we can get it outside of Christ. Every day, I want to see the parade happening. And every day, I want to inspect my garments.

I want the Holy Spirit to come in with his magnifying glass and see that in all of the things that have removed my shame, that in all of the things that make me lift my head up today, if there's anything at all of my own righteousness that I've slipped in, and I must be faithful to remove that. It says in Romans 3 that boasting is excluded because my righteousness will never be able to even be a small little string in the entire garment that gives me freedom from shame. These two things need to happen every day in my life because I'm going to be doing this for all eternity, not just for this period of this life.

I'm not going to suddenly go to heaven and suddenly be worthy. No, it says in Revelation chapter 5, I'll fling down every crown I have and say worthy is the lamb who was slain because I'm still unworthy. Yes, I know I have a crown on my head, but that's going to his feet in an instant because he's worthy.

He alone is worthy, but I don't need to hold my head in shame then. I don't have to hang my head in shame now because I'm righteous in Christ and I want to keep inspecting my garments. Lord Jesus, today have I allowed anything or any of my works to come in to make me righteous and I want to rip it out and say, Lord Jesus, I want to exchange that.

There's this garment, nobody else can see it, but there's this one little string that is my righteousness that is coming in. I want to be ruthless, to be completely righteous in you and to hang my head up without any shame, but only because of you. And that third word, I had many different words.

I think the word that I'd like to use is adoring as it relates to that picture, but so adoring, loyal, available, attached to Jesus that I'm doing whatever he asks me to do. There's that verse in Revelation chapter 14 that we can turn there. Revelation chapter 14, it says about those who sing with Jesus.

Revelation chapter 14 is a select group of people. We will be serving him for all eternity, but see in Revelation chapter 14, verse one, it says that I looked, Revelation 14, verse one, and behold, the lamb was standing on Mount Zion and with him, attached to him, available for him was the bride, the 144,000 they were there with him. And it says in verse three, and they sang a new song.

Who's they? It's not just the 144,000, it's the 144,000 with Jesus. They are attaching themselves to him. They are attached to him.

They're available to sing before the throne. That's how close these people are in heaven for all eternity. That's a picture of eternity.

They'll be singing with Jesus. And it says in verse four, who are these people? The middle of verse four, these are the ones who follow the lamb wherever he goes. I like the present tense of that verse.

It doesn't say that they followed the lamb wherever he went while they were on this earth. No, it doesn't change. No matter what the time is, whether it was today or a billion years from now, this group of people, this 144,000 people, they've made it their life to be attached to Jesus.

They find their glory in being hid in him. They want to decrease so that he can increase. They are trying to become smaller and smaller and completely disappear so that God may become everything.

And they're so attached to Jesus that they follow the lamb wherever he goes. And he's going somewhere today and he's going somewhere tomorrow and he's going somewhere a billion years from now. He's going to be going and attached to him are going to be some believers.

And that is what I want to be in that company. I want to be in that group of people who are constantly wanting to follow the lamb wherever he goes many times a day. And that will never change for all eternity.

A billion years from now, I want that to be what gives me worth. What I worship is that I'm attached to Jesus, that I'm hid in Jesus, that my garment is 100% Jesus, that Sandeep is in the front of the line of the parade of enemies. So I want to repeat the three things that I shared.

I shared one more time. These are three things that helped me to think about not only what I have to have today, what I have to be tomorrow, what I have to take with me a hundred years from now, a thousand years from now, a billion years from now, no matter what justice or injustice I have on this earth, no matter what success or failures I have on this earth, these things I want to carry with me now and for all eternity. And that eternity starts now where I will never seek to rid myself of my unworthiness.

I will never try to think that if I do the right things for the next five years, I'll be somewhat worthy or I'll be at all worthy. No, I want to embrace the truth that even a billion years from now, I'm going to be totally unworthy. I also want to lift my head up in Christ as I allow the truth of the good news that I'm totally righteous in Christ.

I want that to be the measurement of success. Dear brothers and sisters, what is your measurement of success? Is it the money? Is it the toys? Is it the children's? Is it children's education? Let it be this righteous. That's the measurement of success.

And I can be righteous in Christ today. And I can be righteous in Christ tomorrow. And that in the morning, when I wake up, I will reach not for how my day looks or how my calendar looks or whether my bonus

came in or not, or whether I have enough money to pay my bills, but I will reach for the garment of the righteousness of Christ that it'll cover all my shame.

But it'll also help me to lift my head up in his name, righteous in Christ, that I can begin my day with a song on my lips. And finally, that I can be attached to Jesus, adoring Jesus and Jesus alone and available for Jesus and Jesus alone, that I can be singing with Jesus all the day long, available to go wherever he goes, knowing that this is going to be my life a billion years from now. Nothing's going to change about that.

Going with him wherever he goes, singing with him the song before the throne as he sings over me. As I learn to hear his voice singing over me, songs of joy, songs of love. I say, Lord, I want to sing with you.

I want to do more than just listen to you. Give me a tongue of a disciple, not just the ear of a disciple, so that I may sing with you, that the song that comes out of my mouth will be a word that helps the weary, as it says in Isaiah chapter 50, verse 4, that others will hear the song of God through my lips too, as they see me responding to circumstances, attached to Jesus, singing a hymn with him wherever we go. I pray, dear brothers and sisters, that this may be true in our lives.

May we start eternity today. May we start that forever and ever happy life today. May God bless us.

Thank you for listening. I hope that it'd be a blessing in your lives.

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