

週一嗎哪 午間查經分享祈禱會

MONDAY MANNA
July 25, 2022

WHERE IS THE PROFIT, PROGRESS, OR PURPOSE?

By Fritz Klumpp

It was an impressive meeting. Gathered together were admirals, generals, captains, colonels, corporate CEOs, medical doctors, professors. Influential men of various ranks and professions. None of their successes and failures were apparent, however, for without their uniforms they all looked the same. The gathering was a trip down memory lane, our U. S. Naval Academy class of 1961's 55-year reunion, in 2016. As I looked around the room and recaptured memories of all those young warriors, filled with incredible hopes and dreams and aspirations, all I could think of was, "Where have they gone?"

All the once-physically fit young military warriors were now wrinkled old men. I could recognize a few, but it was necessary to look at name tags to identify most of them. Looking more closely, I could recall each of them as they were the day we tossed our caps in the air on graduation day, changed into the uniform of our chosen branch of service, and set forth on the next stage in our great journey of life.

At the reunion we relived all the adventures and misadventures that we had shared during those four years we lived together. There was time to briefly share some of the highlights of the 55 years since. The following morning, we assembled in the beautiful Naval Academy domed chapel. The tradition has been to gather for a memorial service to honor those classmates who have fallen since the last reunion. That year the list contained 66 names. After the Vietnam conflict ended, the numbers slowed, but lately the numbers have increased, a natural consequence of men advancing in years.

Sitting in the historic chapel, I could only wonder how many of those present would be listed in the memorial service program five years from then. Considering the successes of members in this class, I am sure there are some whose names are engraved on monuments, but I could not help but think that eventually, all our names will become engraved in granite – at some cemetery or gravesite.

Death, whom some refer to as "The Grim Reaper," is no respecter of persons. No matter how powerful, successful, or how wealthy we may be, that six-foot hole in the ground is the great equalizer. Death is a very democratic process – we are all going to die. Our personal piece of granite will contain our name and two dates (birth and death), separated by a dash. As one man once said, when evaluating one's life, "it's all about the dash" – what happens in the years in between.

The service included a reading from Ecclesiastes, one of my favorite books of the Bible. Solomon, known as perhaps the wisest man who ever lived, wrote, "*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die...*" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2). Earlier in the book he had asked a profound question: "*What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?*" (Ecclesiastes 1:3). That is, **No Profit**.

His conclusion was not what we might expect. He said, "*What has been will be again, what is done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun*" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). In other words, **No Progress**. Solomon also concluded, "*I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind*" (Ecclesiastes 1:14). Which ultimately means, **No Purpose**.

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If there is no profit, progress, or purpose “under the sun” – on earth – then we must assume these can only be found in Heaven, things that will last for eternity. You are still writing your epitaph, so what will your “dash” say about your life? Will your dash include anything of lasting profit, progress, or purpose?

William “Fritz” Klumpp served as a pilot with the U.S. Navy, including numerous combat missions during the Vietnam War, is a former commercial airline pilot, real estate executive, and former Executive Director of CBMC.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever attended a reunion – whether it be for your high school or college graduation class, or even a family reunion? What was that like for you? How did people react? Were they eager to renew old friendships, or more intent on trying to impress others with what they had accomplished?
2. The statement is made, “It is all about the dash,” meaning the span of time between the date of birth and the date of death. Have you ever thought about how a small punctuation mark like a dash can represent the entire course of someone’s life? How does that make you feel to consider that?
3. In some respects, the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes is not the most encouraging book in the Bible, since it makes statements like “all is vanity” or “all is meaningless.” When you consider that in light of the things you strive for every day, those priorities you establish in your life, what is your reaction?
4. Mr. Klumpp understands the writer of Ecclesiastes as concluding that much of what we regard as most important in life is of **no profit**, results in **no progress**, and accomplishes **no purpose** that will last beyond the grave. Do you agree? Why or why not? How can we change that?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Ecclesiastes 8:15, 12:13-14; John 15:4-5,16; Ephesians 2:10, 4:12-13; Colossians 3:17,23-24

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