

Greetings!

Do any of us know for how long we'll live? And, if we live for a 100 years, what is that to history? This week I heard about a graffiti preacher who put it all into perspective. I think you'll agree with me after reading his story.

The Graffiti Preacher

Imagine. The year is sometime between 1932 and 1967, and you're walking down a street in Sydney, Australia. Suddenly, it appears, then on another street, and another until you've seen it dozens of times. No one knows where it came from, or why it's there but, the message is clear, and it causes concern to those who see it. How will they handle it? What will they do now with its message?

For thirty-five years, it was seen daily by almost everyone. Up one street and then down another; foot paths in all directions made the message clear. In 1969, the poet Douglas Stewart immortalized the word of the graffiti preacher with these words:

That shy mysterious poet Arthur Stace
Whose work was just one single mighty word
Walked in the utmost depths of time and space
And there his word was spoken and he heard
ETERNITY, ETERNITY, it banged him like a bell
Dulcet from heaven sounding, somber from hell.

There, did you see it?

It was formed in a copperplate script and placed in Sydney Square by the architect Ridley Smith, and thus it was seen by over 4 billion souls worldwide at the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics. On the eve of the new millennium, it was emblazoned in fireworks on the Sydney Harbor Bridge for all to see its message. But, why would a city, a nation, become so captivated by it?

Arthur Stace was born February 9, 1885 into a life of poverty and was raised by alcoholic parents. By the age of twelve Arthur had become the ward of the state and shortly thereafter, became an alcoholic himself. Jailed at the age of fifteen, his life turned toward the lower side. He became a lookout for a gambling ring and later a scout for his sister's brothels until his later spiritual conversion.

Arising early each morning, Arthur would pray for an hour, and then between 5:00 and 5:30 A.M. he would leave his home to walk the streets of Sydney. No set pattern, no set plan; just wherever he felt God was directing him, he would walk. With his chalk in his hand, he would kneel on the pavement and write, "**Eternity**". Moving down uncertain paths in his daily journey he wrote it repeatedly, "**Eternity**".

Arthur recalls, ". . . his words were ringing through my brain as I left the church. Suddenly, I began crying and I felt a powerful call from the Lord to write - Eternity. I had a piece of chalk in my pocket, and I bent down right there and wrote it. I've been writing it at least 50 times a day ever since, and that's 30 years ago. The funny thing is that before I wrote it, I could hardly write my own name. I had no schooling and I couldn't have spelled 'Eternity' for a hundred quid. But it came out smoothly, in a beautiful copperplate script. I couldn't understand it, and I still can't. I've tried and tried, but 'Eternity' is the only word that comes out in copperplate. I think Eternity gets the message across, makes people stop and think."

It was November 14, 1932 when Arthur first wrote **Eternity** on a pathway. Over half a million times, in 35 years, the graffiti preacher wrote his message and yet the mystery of the graffiti preacher was not solved until 1956. For 24 years, obscurity and mystery surrounded the word appearing in chalk at the light of each day.

Since reading Arthur's story, I too have been struck by that word -**Eternity**. We spend our existence living our lives in a place that Jesus' brother, James, describes as a "vapor", a "mist" that appears for a little time, vanishes away, and then **Eternity**. What are our lives in comparison to this timeless existence?

The words of "The Preacher" recorded in Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also **set eternity in the hearts of men**; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end."

Listen to his words; everything is beautiful "in its time". There is a "time" for everything, and "He has also set eternity in the hearts of men". We will live today, and then what of tomorrow? We know instinctively in our hearts that there is more than this life and yet, we seldom consider **Eternity**... as though it will never come.

The Bible says, "It is appointed for man to die once, and after this the judgment". There are no second options, no return trips, and no "do overs". We step from here into - **Eternity**.

Arthur caught a glimpse of what we need to see in our time driven society - this is not the end. On the night that Arthur heard the evangelist preach his message, *The Echoes of Eternity* from Isaiah 57:15, "For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity . . .", Arthur's life was forever changed. A humble man saved from a life of alcoholism and sin became a graffiti preacher declaring -**Eternity**.

And, only "**Eternity**" will reveal how many followed in his steps.

And that's just a thought . . .



"For thus says the High and Lofty One Who *inhabits eternity*, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

~ Isaiah 57:15

My Final Word

Eternity: I am forever amazed at the ways God speaks to us from it. The Bible says that He "inhabits eternity", and that He is called the Everlasting. WOW! Can you even begin to fathom the depth of that thought? And yet, the God who "always was" has you in His heart! If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on the door!

My daughter had a birthday this week, and I asked her, "How does it feel to be another year older?" Tonight, I'm sitting here writing this, thinking to myself, how stupid a thought that is in comparison to eternity. A year vs. eternity!

We were not created for here; we were created for eternity. We are, in essence, eternal beings birthed in a temporary housing unit. One day these houses will grow old and collapse, releasing our spirit into the eternal. I've always loved the words of John along those lines, "It does not yet appear what we shall be like when He appears, but we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He really is."

I can't remember the number of funerals I've performed over the past thirty-five years but, I can remember the one thought that has always occurred to me; that person isn't here anymore. One moment they took a breath and the next they stepped into eternity. Then, as I've watched the faces of those gathered around, I couldn't help but wonder, how many of them really get it?

Jesus said, "There is no other way to the Father except through Him." My prayer today will be that if you are called to step into eternity, you'll use the right door!

Waiting on Eternity,

Chris

