

Four Good Reasons to Die

Call to Worship: Psalm 8

Hymn #89- *Come, Thou Almighty King*

1st Scripture: John 3:1-21

Hymn #175- *Man of Sorrows!*

2nd Scripture: Luke 14:25-33

Hymn Insert- *I Surrender All*

Introduction:

One of the greatest marvels, found in a world of marvels, is the reality of "new life." Now, sadly, because of the utterly corrupt nature of the fallen, human heart, we not only lose sight of this (and take this wonder for granted), but we dare, in the name of "inconvenience," murder our unborn, as if they are nothing more than slabs of meat, while in the womb. Only in a desperately wicked and fallen world, could a people walk into an office, horrifically extinguish the flame of new life, and make it out on time, for the 1pm showing of the latest "Hollywood Blockbuster."

But the reality of "life," of "coming into being," of "existing for the first time," is a marvel beyond all marvels. A child is conceived, and the machinery of divine providence works its wonders, as God knits together a unit of life, fashioning it in His own likeness; in accordance with His own glorious image. The Psalmist taps into this reality in Psalm 139:13-16, when he states, "For You formed my inward parts; You covered (wove) me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame (bones were) was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them."

And then, finally, when the "new life," comes to full term; when it is ready to meet the world, it travels through the birth canal, out of his mother, and into the reality of this world. He learns to interact with his environment. Useful arms, legs, fingers and toes. Ears that hear, eyes that see, noses that smell...and an entire world, with other lives, with which to interact! Friends, toys, clothing, school, food, media, technology, siblings, fun, work, bicycles, cars, trains, planes, boats, music, video games, computers, Ipods, smart phones, Face Book, texting,

relationships...and an innumerable gamut of other realities, exist, to help shape life, in "the world as we know it." Indeed, life; the union of an invisible, thinking, delighting, rational, communicating, emotional, desiring soul, with a complex body, to serve its interests...is a profound thing!

But, it is not too long, before the mind begins to develop, and the realization of existing problems within this profound existence, begin to emerge. Pain, sickness, horror, bloodshed, sadness, tears, negative emotions, suffering, crime and ultimately death, become ever present realities. We lie and we are lied to, we steal and are stolen from, we hate and are hated, we curse and are cursed, we envy and are envied...etc. Something is terribly wrong, and doesn't seem to run consistent, with so wonderful a reality as "life!"

And here, from this pulpit, and from the lips of others, and especially from this incomprehensibly, profound, spiritual Book, we call, "the Bible," we are told that this wonderful reality called "life;" our very existence, is cursed, because of a rebellion against our God and Creator, formulated by our first parents. And by them, we have inherited the infection of a sin nature, which is the cause of all suffering and misery and death, in this world. You see it all around you; if you are honest, you see it in you. You actually delight in doing things that are wrong in the sight of God, as a means of satisfying fleshly desires, which have themselves found life, because of the infection of sin that is in us. The desire to know, love and serve your Creator...it doesn't naturally exist...or if it does, it is artificial, at best; a means of attempting to utilize God, as some kind of a "self-serving" genie, with no inkling of a desire to glorify Him, in accordance with His own right, as God.

And so, now you are told, "Son, daughter, friend...you have a very serious problem; indeed, a death sentence, wired into your very soul. And if your soul remains in its present condition, you will be the object of God's undying wrath, forever, when you stand before him, at the Final Judgment!" "Well mom, dad, pastor, friend...what then do I do? You speak of this forgiveness and redemption in Christ, but what does that entail? What is the trajectory for the disciple of Christ; for the "Christian? Do I just say this prayer? Do I simply make a profession of faith in this Jesus, about whom you speak?"

And at that moment, the son, daughter, friend, who is inquiring, stands among the great multitude of people, who crowded around the Lord Jesus Christ, when He spoke the words, recorded in our main text, here in Luke's Gospel. And he hears, in essence, "If you desire the forgiveness and eternal life, which come in embracing the Lord Jesus Christ, then you must follow Him...to Calvary; to Golgotha, the place of the skull...and you must die, right there, daily, to yourself." "But wait...are you telling me, that everything here...all of this, which I have come to know, love and serve in this life...I have to let it all go? I have to free my hands from everything else; from actively pursuing the desires of my flesh, and the desires, which run this world...so that, I can lay hold of *a cross*? I have to be willing to forsake ALL, if I am to be a disciple of Christ?"

"Son, daughter, friend...you must be willing to die, and you must be born again. You must lose this life, if you are to find true life. You must be transferred into a new kingdom; a kingdom that is presently visible, only in the heart, where you now live for the glory of another...even, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who created you, unto that end."

Seems like a lot to ask of a life that presently exists in this world. How do you close your eyes to all of this, as it were, and live in the light of a whole new reality? Well, of course, God has to give you eyes, to see the precious value of that new reality; that Kingdom of Heaven, and Pearl of Great Price. And God has to register the certainty of this fading, dying life, into the depths of your heart and soul, so that you will realize that what you are holding on to, is very temporary, and not worth forfeiting your soul over.

But, in addition to these things, let me leave you with "four good reasons to die" to this life:

I. Reason #1

The first reason to die, is because, what matters eternally is *God!*

This life; any life whatsoever (for that matter), in a trillion worlds, only has meaning because of Him, who was, "In the beginning." God is before all things, and God is the beginning and end of all things, and everything that matters must then be in accordance with His will.

Friends, whatever surrounds your life; whatever makes up your life; every last iota and detail of your reality; the very substance of you and all that composes you, only finds any value whatsoever, in the value that your Creator has placed on you, in accordance with His infinite and unchanging will. Your world and life mean absolutely nothing; indeed, less than nothing, outside of the context of God and His will. You're the garden, He is the Gardener. You're the easel, He is the Painter. You're the clay, He is the Potter. The garden, easel and clay, only take on their life and meaning, from the one who shapes and molds them. They say, as it were, "I want to be whatever my creator has created me to be, and that, forever!"

And so, when God calls us to die to our present reality, because it has been infected with sin, and driven away from the glorious purpose of glorifying God (of pleasing and exalting Him), the Designer and Creator, so that we can be freely welcomed into a new, but presently hidden reality, through a means that He has provided (in His Son), the mere fact that He is God, is compelling reason enough to die!

When the One, who has "set His glory above the heavens" (Ps. 8:1); the One, whose glory far, far exceeds even all that is revealed to us, in this marvelous and wondrous creation (the depths of which, still remain unknown to us), calls us to do *anything* at all, whatsoever, that alone ought to compel us to obey, without question. That alone ought to drive us to be willing to give up anything and everything that He commands us to give up. That said, God has done more than command us, hasn't He? He has graciously condescended much further, recognizing that our sinful hearts are very naturally prone toward doubting even Him. And so, He has filled this entire Book with promises and reminders; indeed, He has sworn by Himself, so that we might be thoroughly convinced of His faithfulness, to do all that He has promised. But again, the mere fact that He is God, ought to be compelling enough, for us to be willing to die to this life.

II. Reason #2

The second reason to die, is because, what matters eternally, is *God's plan* for this creation, which can be summed up in two general ways: the redemption of man, and the glorification of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This system of life, with all of its bells and whistles; with politics and entertainment and technological advancement and "moving up the corporate ladder," and wars and "trying to keep up with the Jones's"; the entire, ongoing rotation of this globe on its axis, with everything done under the sun, is all but one big machine, as it were, which is ultimately governed by the breath of an omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, almighty God, whose will cannot possibly, even for a moment, fail.

And brethren, unlike the fleet of the Starship Enterprise, which, in its searching of galaxies beyond measure, to discover meaning and purpose, and to "boldly go where no man has ever gone before," we are given the end of the equation, right here, in this Book. We are given all that matters. And in a nut shell, it is God redeeming a fallen and sin infected people, out of a world that has gone utterly wrong, when our first parents, fell in the Garden. It is God, by His means, and by His grace, reaching into our corrupt and defiled existence, so that He might, pull some out of this ruined life, and bring them into another righteous one, subject to the authority and rule of His glorious, righteous Son! And the way into that life; is through the portal of "dying to self" here and now....daily. It is by way of disposing of the rotting and rusting and moth eaten treasures of this world, so that we might inherit the eternal treasures in glory!

And in all of this, God is righteously and most properly, exalting the Second Person of the Trinity, unto the glorification of the Trinity. God's Son, who is eternal, by whom (through whom and for whom) everything was created; who is worthy, who has maintained full and complete fellowship with the Father (and the Holy Spirit) from eternity past, is to be lifted up, exalted, marveled over and knelt before, by every created thing...to the glory of God! And His incarnation (His laying aside His own inherent glory to become man), and His righteous life, and His glorious death, and His resurrection, have gained Him that unique right, not only as God, but also as Man; the God-Man!

And so, God's plan of redemption and the exaltation and glorification of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, warrant our dying to self.

III. Reason #3

The third reason to die, is because, what matters eternally, is securing a relationship with our God, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Less our souls, there is not a single created thing in this world, which we can take with us, beyond the grave. The grave is the great filter, through which, only the soul passes. And that is why our Lord states in a parallel text, "What profit is there, if a man gains the whole world, and yet, loses his own soul? And what would a man give in exchange for his soul?"

And so, the one thing that matters in this life, is securing a relationship with our Living God, through His Son Jesus Christ! And by that means, we will not only enjoy the most blessed experience of true, abundant life, forever; we will not only drink from the well that will never leave us thirsty, and eat the bread of heaven, which will forever satisfy our hunger, but we will eternally preserve the one thing that lasts in this life...our never dying souls...the very substance of your being, which makes you you, and me me!

What is eternal life? According to Jesus (and I think He knows), it is to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent! What matters here and now, more than anything, friends, is not bound up in dying, deteriorating, fading, breaking, unfulfilling material things! It is bound up in a relationship...a relationship with the Living God, who created you and I, and all things, for His glory! There is far, far, infinitely more, to be found in a Garden, where we are permitted to "walk with God in the cool of the day," than there is to be found, in all of the wealthiest metropolises, with all of their material trinkets and technological bells and whistles, combined! True life; abundant life, is found in having fellowship with God; walking with God; recognizing that the gracious smile of God is ever upon you; that when I wake up tomorrow, God will be with me, and all of this, is granted, secured, sustained and maintained, by our union with Jesus Christ, the Son of God! Yes, we must die! But, we die with Him who died! We are buried with Him in His death, and raised up new, in His resurrection! We are born again...unto new ideals, new dreams, new desires, new hopes, with a new focus, driven by new motivations...and there is no turning back! Indeed, it would be insane to turn back! It would be like a dog, returning back to eat its own vomit!

We are in touch with; in fellowship with, in communion with, the living God...and that is all that matters! "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again," which leads us to our final reason.

IV. Reason #4

The fourth reason to die, is because, what matters eternally, is living to love, serve, worship and glorify God!

The wrench has a purpose...to tighten and loosen the bolt. It finds little use or purpose in mixing the ingredients to make pancakes. A whisk serves that purpose. The toaster has a purpose...to toast bread. It finds little use or purpose in digging holes. The shovel serves that purpose. The kite has a purpose...to fly and glide in the sky. It finds little use or purpose in exploring the ocean floors. Other, aquatic equipment, serves that purpose. And human beings, who bear the very image of God; who rationalize, think, interact, love, reign...etc, were created to love, serve, worship and glorify God. They find no beneficial use or purpose, in serving fleshly lusts. Cursed, ruined beings serve that purpose.

When a living soul, is in fellowship with God, through Jesus Christ, they have found everything that makes sense, true and lasting fulfillment, and the joy unspeakable, meant for all who were given the blessed privilege, of existence itself. We exist for God, and our souls are restless; they are ever searching for something more, until they find God Himself. And it is there, that the blessed treasure of living and serving within the will of God, is found. And it is there, that the short-lived, unfulfilling, cursed reality of self absorption, selfish ambition, and every other reality that puts self at the center, is found, to be the deceptive, filthy lie that it is. The only true and lasting joy, which could ever trigger abundant life in the soul, is found in loving, serving, worshipping and glorifying God. And while the full realization of this, in this life, is progressive, the more we push in that direction, the more we joyfully recognize that this is what it is all about.

That is why the child of God, after tasting of God and His glory, when through trial, he lacks a sense of the presence of God, in which he once reveled, he cries out with David (in the

wilderness of Judah), not primarily for water. His words, found in Psalm 63 are, "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water, So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips" (vs. 1-5).

Only death can lead to the realization of that type of hunger for, and value placed upon, the Living God!

Conclusion:

Four compelling reasons to die: All that matters eternally is God Himself, God's plan for creation in redemption and the exaltation of His Son, securing a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and loving, serving, worshiping and glorifying God.

To the unbeliever, the hidden treasure in the field of this chaotic, busy and lost world, will take you here. Seek Christ with every fiber of your being; lay aside every other pursuit, and seek Him while He may be found. You will never regret it! Your sins, and your present pursuit of self-interests, which could never satisfy, currently blind you from this reality. Aren't you tired of the empty pursuit of vanity, in a dying, fading world? Seek the resurrected Christ, who lived among us, to rescue lost sinners, from eternal damnation. He died, to transfer lost sinners, from out of this present darkness, into the light of life, that He gives! Call upon Him...die to all of this, and find new life in Him!

To the believer, what does all of this look like, in *your present* circumstances? I am not asking about, what you once were, what you once professed or the zeal that you once had. Where are you right now? Have you lost sight of Christ, having become busy with so many other things? Is the Kingdom of God, a reality, which is presently being lived out of *your heart*, in the daily context, in which you find yourself? Or have you forgotten? Ask yourself...at work, at home, at church, on line at the grocery store...wherever you are, at any moment, why am I living right here, and right now? What is this that I am doing, and how does it fit, within the scheme of God, His will, and His glory? Why does He have me right here, right now, at this

very moment? Have I lost sight of that? Have I lost my first love? Well, by the grace of God, in Jesus Christ, let me strive to get back on course...daily. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. Whoever loves his life, will lose it. But whoever loses his life, for My sake, will find it!"

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Ephesians 3:14-21