

Sermon Series: “Intentional Disciples—Purposeful Service”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield—4/16/2006(Easter)

Title: “Easter-based Service”

Text: 1 Corinthians 15: 55-58

Intro.: Ills.: (Taking the Sting—early) (drama: The Sting—late)

Theme: The fact that Jesus came out of the grave not only guarantees that we will some day but now frees us up to live out our lives to the fullest purpose which God intended for them.

Jesus has been taken the sting out of death

- The sting of death is a reality in all of our lives
 1. **Ills.: The reality of death**
 2. Brought on by Adam and Eve’s fall and our blind stumbling into sin
 - a. *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. Rom. 5: 12*
 3. Living in denial of death’s reality does not put off death; it just increases the panic when it shows up at the door
 - a. *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. Heb. 9: 27*
- Death only has its sting if we still stand under sins penalty and curse (**Print 15: 55-56**)
 1. *The soul that sins, it shall die. Ezekiel 18:4*
 2. The march of death came because our sin ruptured God’s perfect plan
 - a. Demise of plans, aging of body, annoying drip of things that break, frustration of unfulfilled work & relationships
 - b. **Ills.: Sweeping up Sinclair Lewis’ dust**
 3. When living underneath the fear of “what will happen next”, you have submitted to death’s grip and sting
- Jesus’ de-stinging of death takes the fear factor of death out of our lives (**Print 15: 57**)
 1. **Ills.: One advantage of DST – no longer living in the denial of tape-delayed programming**
 2. Often, we not only live in *denial of death but also of the victory of Jesus*
 - a. Clawing at every remaining scrap of life when we or a loved one pass through the “valley of death’s shadow”
 - b. Living under remorse, regret, and bitterness for time wasted backing into death rather than running forward to life
 - c. Destroyed and demoralized when failure reminds us of the ultimate failure of our bodies yet to come
 3. Jesus is able to give life back; so we do not have to mourn life’s declines
 - a. *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2Cor.4:16-18*

Jesus has put the life back into our lives (Print and read 15: 58)

- ***Therefore, if Jesus is rise from the dead . . .***
- **Be strong and steady!**
 1. No matter the outward circumstances, your eternal life is secure
 - a. **Ills.: Anti-God rally disarmed by the resurrection**
 2. Define your life by what you will become not by what your are
 - a. *You have died, and your **real life** is hidden with Christ in God. Christ is your life. When he appears, then you, too, will appear with him in glory. Col 3: 3-4*
 - b. Steady as she goes and unmoved by the little “flies” of life — reflecting God’s nature alive within you in Christ
- **Be enthusiastically abounding in the Lord’s work!**
 1. *God has made us what we are. He has created us in Christ Jesus to live lives filled with good works that he has prepared for us to do. Eph. 2:10*
 2. Life time of God-given service opportunities as object lessons we are living for a redeemed and resurrected purpose
- **Redeemed and raised up to recognize the value in the Lord’s work**
 1. Raised to a resurrection work ethic because the work (kopos) may not seem all that glorious
 2. Words of advise from Solomon on a meaningful legacy in life’s work (**Print and read Ecclesiastes 2: 18-26**)
 3. Know that because Jesus lives nothing that you do in home, job, marriage, school, church, in life is in vain

Taking the Sting

A boy and his father were driving down a country road on a beautiful spring afternoon, when a bumblebee flew in the car window. The little boy, who was allergic to bee stings, was petrified. The father quickly reached out, grabbed the bee, squeezed it in his hand, and then released it. The boy grew frantic as it buzzed by him. Once again the father reached out his hand, but this time he pointed to his palm. There stuck in his skin was the stinger of the bee. "Do you see this?" he asked. "You don't need to be afraid anymore. I've taken the sting for you." We do not need to fear death anymore. Christ has died and risen again. He has taken the sting from death.

Adrian Dieleman, Waupun, Wisconsin. Leadership, Vol. 15, no. 1.

The reality of Death

Max Lucado writes in his book *Traveling Light*,

"We all have to face it. IN a life marked by doctor appointments, dentist appointments, and school appointments, there is one appointment that none of us will miss, the appointment with death. "Everyone must die once, and after that be judged by God," Heb. 9:27, (TEV) says. Oh, how we'd like to change that verse. Just a word or two would suffice. "*Nearly everyone must die . . .*" or *Everyone but me must die . . .*" or "*Everyone who forgets to eat right and take vitamins must die. . .*" But those are not God's words. In His plan everyone must die, even those who eat right and take their vitamins. I could have gone all day without reminding you of that. We do our best to avoid the topic. One wise man, however, urges us to face it squarely: "We all must die, and everyone living should think about this."(Eccles. 7:2) Solomon isn't promoting a morbid obsession with death. He is reminding us to be honest about the inevitable. Moses gave the same exhortation. IN the only psalm attributed to his pen, he prayed, "Teach us how short our lives really are so that we may be wise." (Ps. 90:12) The wise remember the brevity of life. Exercise may buy us a few more heartbeats. Medicine may grant us a few more breaths. But in the end, there is an end. And the best way to face life is to be honest about death." **Max Lucado in *Traveling Light* W Publishing Group, Copyright 2001, pp. 83-84.**

Sweeping up Sinclair Lewis

February 7 is the day Sinclair Lewis was born in 1885 at Sauk Center, Minnesota. Lewis won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1930. His best known works of social satire were *Main Street*, *It Can't Happen Here* and *Babbalanza*. Yet, for all his renown and wealth, Lewis died in Rome of alcoholism. Upon his death in 1951, he was cremated and his ashes sent to Rome's U.S. Embassy for disposition. One morning a visitor noticed a worker on her knees with a dustpan and broom. Next to her was an overturned funerary urn. When asked what she was doing, she replied nonchalantly, "Sweeping up Sinclair Lewis." If we focus on the words, "sweeping up Sinclair Lewis," we realize the abject futility of the human experience outside of the soul and its relationship to God. **On This Day, (Crescent Books 1992); Clifton Fadiman, *The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes*, (Little, Brown & Co., 1985); submitted**

Anti-God Rally Disarmed

Dr. George Sweeting tells of an incident in the early 1920s when Communist leader Nikolai Bukharin was sent from Moscow to Kiev to address an anti-God rally. For an hour he abused and ridiculed the Christian faith until it seemed as if the whole structure of belief was in ruins. Then questions were invited. An Orthodox church priest rose and asked to speak. He turned, faced the people, and gave the Easter greeting, "He is risen!" Instantly the assembly rose to its feet and the reply came back loud and clear, "He is risen indeed!" **Today in the Word, September, 1989, p. 8.**

1 Cor. 15:55-58

⁵⁵Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶Sin gives death its sting, and the curse of God's law gives sin its power. ⁵⁷Thank God that he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸Therefore, then, family of God, be strong and steady. Always excel in the work you do for the Lord. You know that the hard work you do for the Lord is not pointless.

Eccles. 2:18-26

I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless. A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness.