

Sermon Series: “Easter’s Glow in Our Lives” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN— 4/26/09

Title: “An Easter Perspective on Living and Dying”

Text: **Philippians 1:18b-26**

Intro.: *Illus.: Do Dragons stalk our unknown?*

Theme: Rather than being uncertain about our future, short and long term, we find a quieting and comforting perspective by living out our lives with a resurrection hope.

So why do you want to live or why do you want to die?

- Sometimes, we approach living and dying from a selfish perspective
 1. Wanting to go on living so that we can keep on enjoying
 - a. *When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4:3*
 - b. Nothing wrong with enjoying family and possessions as gifts from God but they are not what your life is about
 2. Wanting to go on living because we are afraid to let go of the control
 - a. Paul might have desired to stay around so he could protect his church and straighten out misguided ones (**vs. 18**)
 - b. Sometimes, in our obsessive-compulsive thinking we are not willing to let “God be God and His will be done” with our children, health, ambitions and future plans, job/career and so we fight God’s plan for our life
 3. Wanting to die because we are just tired of it all
 - a. ***Elijah in the desert*** - *He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." 1 Kings 19:10*
 - b. Sometimes, the pain of the relationship or failure or loss of control in the illness seems more than we can bear
 - c. But wanting to die, just because it is the easy way out, is not the resurrection perspective Paul is speaking of
- A resurrection perspective of rejoicing (**vs. 18**)
 1. Knowing that even in my trials, I have no past faults hunting my present (**vs. 20a**)
 2. Knowing my real life has started in Christ which can neither be affected by circumstances of life or physical death
 - a. **vs. 21**
 3. Finding satisfaction in worshipping my Savior in every circumstance (**vs. 20b**)
 - a. *But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 1 Peter 4:13-14*
 - b. *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. James 1:2-3*
 - c. **Illus.: The Garbage Truck**

When “Jesus as the Lord of our live,” living and dying really are not the focus

- Jesus’ resurrection demonstrates that all things are under his control
 1. **1 Corinthians 15: 20-26 – HE IS LORD!**
 2. With all things under his control we are secure to turn over control of our lives and moment of our death to Him
- Paul was content and intent on being useful to the Lord in living or dying
 1. Could see his imprisonment/death as a way by which God might stir on the life of others through his witness
 - a. **Illus.: Thinking about climbing**
 2. Could see his continued living as a way to reach and touch someone else. (**vs. 22-26**)
 - a. *For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Romans 14:7-8*
 3. What person does God still have for you to touch with his love? (today, tomorrow, and the tomorrows yet to come)
- When we believe that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life – we see our life as a continuum
 1. *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26*
 2. Seeing God’s deliverance in Christ as either freedom to keep on living or freedom by going home
 - a. **Philippians 1: 19-20**
 - b. **Illus.: Set your mind on heaven – C.S. Lewis**

Do Dragons Stalk Our Unknown?

Most people are afraid of the unknown. Those things we have never seen or experienced can seem overwhelming. On the old maps, back before the world was understood in modern terms, cartographers, map makers, would put down what they knew, but at the edges of the map, beyond which they had no knowledge or understanding, they would often write, "Beyond here, there be dragons." **Ed Rowell, in his sermon "Mary—A Song of Trust," PreachingToday.com**

Graham on Aging and Death

In August of 2006, *Newsweek* magazine profiled the lives of Ruth and Billy Graham— not their historic evangelistic crusades and international impact, but their life as an elderly couple approaching their final chapters on earth. Billy was quoted on his perspective on this life and the next: I do not fear death. I may fear a little bit about the process, but not death itself, because I think the moment that my spirit leaves this body, I will be in the presence of the Lord." **Jon Meacham, "Pilgrim's Progress," Newsweek (8-14-06) p.43**

Think about climbing

When my son Aaron was five years old, he kept asking me to help him climb a very large tree in our backyard. At the time of his asking, I told him it was too cold. Finally, when it was warm enough out, it seemed like a good time for him to learn how to climb a tree. When I lifted Aaron onto the tree's lowest branch, he panicked for fear of falling. I tried to coach him along, telling him to first kneel on the branch, then slowly stand up and climb to the center of the tree. But the only thing Aaron was concerned about was falling. He kept whining and crying, "I'm going to fall! I'm going to fall!" I was unable to coax him, so I shouted, "Aaron!" Once I got his attention, I said, "Don't think about falling; think about climbing." Aaron thought about that for a moment, and then he proceeded to stand and climb to the center of the tree. His fear was gone, and he was able to do what he wanted. The next week Aaron wanted to climb the same tree again. This time I lifted him onto the lowest branch, and he said, "Daddy, this time I will think about climbing." He climbed confidently right up into the middle of the tree. The phrase "think about climbing" has stuck with me. As I think about change in my own life—about tasks or projects that I need to complete that seem impossible—I often feel overwhelmed with fear. If I allow the fear to overcome me, I will be emotionally crippled. But if I think about climbing—not falling—then I will be able to see the project or challenge from a new height, with a new perspective. **Jerry Van Auken, Kokomo, Indiana**

The Garbage Truck

Five years ago, I learned this lesson in the back of a taxicab in Indianapolis. Here's what happened: I hopped in a taxi and we took off for the airport. We were driving in the right lane when suddenly a black car jumped out of a parking space right in front of us. My taxi driver slammed on his brakes, skidded and missed the other car by just inches! The driver of the other car whipped his head around and started yelling at us. My taxi driver just smiled and waved at the guy. And I mean he was **really** friendly. So, I asked, "Why did you just do that? This guy almost ruined your car and sent us to the hospital!" This is when my taxi driver taught me what I now call 'The Law of the Garbage Truck.' He explained that many people are like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage, full of frustration, full of anger and full of disappointment. As their garbage piles up, they need a place to dump it and sometimes they'll dump it on you. Don't take it personally. Just smile, wave, wish them well and move on. Don't take their garbage and spread it to other people at work, at home or on the streets. The bottom line is that successful people **do not** let garbage trucks take over their day. Life is too short to wake up in the morning with regrets, so...Love the people who treat you right. Pray for the ones who don't.

Set Your Mind on Heaven

Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at earth and you will get neither. — **C. S. Lewis, Irish professor, author, and apologist (1898–1963)**

Philippians 1:18-26

¹⁸But what does it matter? Nothing matters except that, in one way or another, people are told the message about Christ, whether with honest or dishonest motives, and I'm happy about that. Yes, I will continue to be happy ¹⁹for another reason. I know that I will be set free through your prayers and through the help that comes from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. ²⁰I eagerly expect and hope that I will have nothing to be ashamed of. I will speak very boldly and honor Christ in my body, now as always, whether I live or die. ²¹Christ means everything to me in this life, and when I die I'll have even more. ²²If I continue to live in this life, my work will produce more results. I don't know which I would prefer. ²³I find it hard to choose between the two. I would like to leave this life and be with Christ. That's by far the better choice. ²⁴But for your sake it's better that I remain in this life. ²⁵Since I'm convinced of this, I know that I will continue to live and be with all of you. This will help you to grow and be joyful in your faith. ²⁶So by coming to you again, I want to give you even more reason to have pride in Christ Jesus with me. [GW]

1 Corinthiansw 15:20-26

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²²For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death.