



Title: Life in Death

Series: *Paths of Life*

Pastor Chad E. Billington

March 17, 2019 AM Services
Smythe Street Church

CONVERSATION WITH MY SON AT BEDTIME.

TUCKING HIM IN, HE TOLD ME HE WILL GET HEIDI'S CHILDHOOD STUFFED ANIMAL WHEN SHE DIES.

THEN ASKS WHY WE HAVE TO DIE? IT'S NOT FAIR, HE WON'T GET TO TAKE 'WOOFY' (HIS STUFFED TOY DOG) WITH HIM WHEN HE DIES? HE'LL MISS HIS THING, ESPECIALLY WOOFY, HE WON'T BE ABLE TO SNUGGLE HIM WHEN HE DIES.

"WHY DO WE HAVE TO DIE ANYWAY? I DON'T WANT TO DIE."

Interestingly connected as I thought of our series: Paths of Life

Series leading us up to Easter.

Jeremiah 6:16a (ESV)

"Thus says the LORD: 'Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.'"

Taking time with ancient truths and practices that over generations of believers have guided us to the life.

Back to the Nathaniel Story

Irony, we are talking about "Paths of Life" as we lead up to a season which much of the time is spent pondering death.

Christianity is fairly unique in that while many beliefs have founders who have died. (You can visit the graves of Confucious, Joseph Smith [Mormonism], Muhammad [Islam, in Medina, Saudi Arabia], Buddha [his ashes are kept in India].

Christianity is unique in that the death of Jesus is not only historical, but according to those who followed him, in many ways it was a climactic and essential part of his work and life.

Why do Christians give so much attention to death?

The Passion of the Christ which was an R-rated telling of the story that held nothing back in Mel Gibson's portraying the violence of the crucifixion.

This is not just a modern fascination, across the ages theologians have written volumes on the death of Jesus.

The predominant symbol that the church has embraced across the ages has been the cross. You find it on church buildings, in jewellery, tattoos.

Large portions of the gospel accounts of Jesus' life centre on the events surrounding his journey to Jerusalem, consume a large percentage of the gospel accounts of his life.

Think about it, Jesus lived over 30 years of his life, and for those who wrote an account of his life, approximately one third of what is written in the Gospels centres around the last week of his life.

This image, the cross seems to be at the heart of what Christianity is about, while at the same time being among the hardest things for people to grasp.

Are Christians morbid? Foolish?

1 Corinthians 1:23 (ESV)

...we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

Today's Passage

Jesus has confronted religious leaders of his day, who had authority, but did not recognize a miracle when it was right under their eyes.

He then uses the image of a shepherd's care for sheep to talk about his care for those who are his people.

John 10:11–18 (ESV)

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have

authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

JESUS DIDN'T HAVE TO DIE, JESUS CHOSE TO DIE.

I know that doesn't answer all the questions, but we cannot rush past it to hurriedly.

The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus is not just a man, he is God with us, the one who was there when the stars were born and all came into being.

This God, in himself chooses to create us, and when sin mars creation and who we are, he chooses to lay down his life for us.

In modern times, I have heard people compare the crucifixion to 'divine child abuse.' God was so mad at us that he had to beat someone up, so he took his son and let everyone go at him and poured his wrath out on Jesus.

There are two problems with that view,

First,

this is not how Jesus himself seems to explain what would happen.

Jesus lays down his life for his friends.

John 10:15, 18 (ESV)

I lay down my life for the sheep. ... No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Second, Jesus is God Acting on Our Behalf

2 Corinthians 5:19 (ESV)

... in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

The message we get from John's gospel and throughout the New Testament is that

Different ways of explaining it:¹

Irenaeus – (and Eastern Orthodox churches) – Recapitulation – Jesus as is a ‘second Adam’ that succeeds in living a sinless existence. His life transforms and carries the story of all creation to a new level.

Early Church Fathers – *Christus Victor* - Humans were in need of freedom from enslavement to sin, death, and the devil. Jesus, the victorious king defeated the powers of darkness.

Anselm – restores to God the debt of honour he was due after our disobedience.

Luther and Calvin – see how Christ takes on our sin in exchange for his holiness and purity.

The 1000-foot view.

In the end, I come back to my conversation with Nate. We all seem to realize that something is wrong, it shouldn't be this way.

Something is wrong, we shouldn't have to die.

Something is wrong with us, while we are good and beautiful, there is something inside of each of us that bursts out with evil and sin.

Romans 6:23 (ESV)
For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Invitation

John 10:14, 16
I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me... and I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.

¹ It is impossible to summarize many of these atonement theories in a sentence, but they are included to demonstrate that there are different ways of coming at the question of why Jesus died.

The path of life begins by heeding Christ's call to be his. His sheep, his disciple, his follower, his child.

God loves you, this is the foundation of life, and he calls you be his own.

John 3:16 (ESV)
"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

If you will believe in Jesus, put your trust in him, accept his call to be your shepherd, to be your Lord, to take ownership and rule of your life, to trust that this Jesus who is God in the flesh, and hear the call of the one laid down his life for you, and follow him.

This is the ultimate path of life.

PRAYER OF INVITATION TO CHOOSE TO FOLLOW JESUS

- If you are exploring your faith, or wondering what all this means, Alpha is a great spot for you to start
- If you have followed Jesus for a long time, we continually come back to declaring Jesus as lord over our lives, and seeking to listen to him in our lives.

Lectio Introduction

As we said near the start of the sermon, during our series we are Taking time with ancient truths and practices that over generations of believers have guided us to the life.

One of the questions I hear often is how can we learn to hear the voice of Jesus? Pastor Verner is coming today to talk to us about a practice by which we can become more familiar with God's voice.

_____ Pastor Verner's Notes _____

- During this season we have been inviting you to discover some ANCIENT PRACTICES; those ancient paths that help us find Life.
- This morning I want to mention an ancient method that has helped bring LIFE in my personal daily Bible reading for years.

Not only is it important to read your Bible, but **we want to be able to listening to what God would speak ours your heart** as we read His Word.

So this morning I want to look at a scriptural reading method that began in the 6th century with Saint Benedict of Nursia in Italy (*Nothing to do with Eggs Benedict*)

The method for scriptural reading, meditation and prayer that he taught is called **Lectio Divina** (Latin for "*Divine Reading*")

- This Benedictine practice aims to treat Scripture as a way of listening to God and to open our hearts to the voice of Jesus.
- Traditionally, Lectio Divina has four steps:
 - 1) READ (*Lectio*)
 - 2) MEDITATE (*Meditatio*)
 - 3) PRAY (*Oratio*)
 - 4) CONTEMPLATE (*Contemplatio*)

Let's take a minute and unpack these four steps:



Lectio ("*read*")

(a) Find a quiet place with no distractions.

- Get rid of the gadgets (Cell phone, music, technology)
- I prefer paper (Kindles or Tablets are not bad as long as they are not “dinging” at you)

(b) Pray a short prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to guide the reading of His Word.

“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. (In your Word)” Psalm 119:18

(c) Read the selected passage of scripture slowly.



Meditatio ("*meditate*")

(a) After reading the passage meditate (ponder) on the scripture passage. I often re-read the passage!

(b) Try not to assign a meaning to it at first but wait instead for the Holy Spirit to illuminate something out of the passage.

IT WILL STAND OUT!

- Avoid the temptation to slip into “study mode”.
- It is very helpful to write down in a journal the things that start coming to you from the passage.



Oratio ("*pray*")

Take a few minutes and turn the things you have felt in your heart from the passage into a prayer back to God.



Contemplatio ("*contemplate*")

Rest silently in His presence letting go of your own agendas, ideas, impatience, plans, words and thoughts, and listen at the deepest level for that still small voice of His whisper.

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”

(Verse 12) “When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.” John 13: 3–5, 12–15 (ESV)

This is God’s Word



READ



MEDITATE



PRAY



CONTEMPLATE

Lectio Divina

Concluding Prayer / Benediction

You are the good shepherd

We are like sheep, we go astray.

Help us to hear your voice, to hear your call, to follow your paths.

Help us to remember we are like sheep, we need your protection

We need your care. Forgive us when we choose our own paths. Thank you for coming after us when we isolate ourselves alone. Bring us back to your fold. In Jesus’ name. Amen

