

Fourth Sunday after Easter
April 7/8, 2022

What is life? What is death? We fear that which we do not understand. We also become desperate when we face things of which we are afraid. The attitude can come in where we think to ourselves that whatever is happening could not, should not, cannot be happening to me. It may have happened to another, but it should not happen to me.

The reality in life is that sometimes things do happen which we do not like. What do we do. It is easy to go to the place where we think in the terms of “if I had enough faith.” God allows what He allows for His own reasons. In part, we know that God loves us and that everything that happens, ultimately, is for our good. But getting there can be difficult for us. Worse yet are those, when under difficult times, say that there can be no God. If there is a good God, then why do bad things happen? Jesus is God and very bad things happened to Him.

Why the difficulty? As the culture has unfolded over the past hundred years, it seems to have moved from optimistic with scientific progress, new inventions, and ease of life through several shifts which have debilitated the family, morality, and decency. We can lament, or we can use this opportunity to draw close to the Lord. It’s getting close, but it is still not as bad as it was in the days of Jesus. The Roman Empire was downright nasty in every way. But things have gotten very goofy indeed.

So why was Tabitha, Dorcas, ‘Gazelle’ healed? The Lord has His reasons for everything. When one is healed this side of heaven, it may be for a witness. It might be that the Lord has something that needs to be done later. It might be for any number of reasons, but the most important thing for us to realize is that it is the Lord’s call. This became known throughout Joppa and many came to believe. But think about this for a moment. Have you not been healed from the disease of sin? Has not Christ made the forgiveness of all of your sins not only possible, but sure? Though you die, shall you not live? Yes to all of these, but it seems that there has been an increasing anxiety that answers these realities as theories and the truth of death as a fiction.

If the Lord is our shepherd – and He is – I shall not want. Well, that is not true either for there are many things I want. But if your mind went there, do you see how our society has so conditioned us that we deny the absolute provision of grace and think in purely temporal and physical terms. Whether I live or I die, I belong to Christ. Surely goodness and mercy are following you. Yes, goodness and mercy is with you and shall be all the days of your life.

The world is tossed about by dissatisfaction. No matter what you have, the moment you obtain the latest and greatest, there is something better and newer that has just come out. No matter how much you achieve, in the eyes of the world, it is never enough. Our Lord has come so that we are no longer tossed about by the fickleness of this world, but invited to come into the eternal presence of the living God and dwell with Him no matter what. The world may argue all it likes about the reality of God. We may think that believing in God is up to us, but the truth is that we have been created by the Lord and we belong to Him. Although the world has gone quite wrong, we have been made right in and through Christ. Maybe this is where the problem sneaks into our thinking and acting.

I am still a sinner. Well, actually, not really. I mean, I do sin, but then I desire to do what is pleasing to the Lord. I say that, but then do another thing. This befuddlement makes me think that I am not doing enough. Of course, with all of the pretenders around us, we look at others and see what they want us to see and all seems well, but is it? Whether it is or isn’t is not the

point. It is not about seeming good, it is about being folded into the Father's arms and living in the relationship He gives us through Christ. It is about the God of all creation showing up and inviting us to follow Him. It is about being saved. There is the rub. We act as if we need to do certain things and then we'll be in good standing with God. This subtle way of continuing the rebellion hampers what we clearly hear in Scripture. We are saved. That means that God is the One who is doing what needs to be done. In us, to be sure, but it is God who is doing it.

"Who are these who are robed in white?" Listen to the words of Scripture, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal." We are reminded that living in this age of anxiety, depression, insecurities, and the condescension of those around us is an ordeal. Our Lord knows this. He has lived it. He has a purpose for everything and so living in the knowledge that this world is tough, He gives us His peace which is not dependent upon this world which is failing, but upon Him who never changes and cannot fail. Therefore, meditate upon those places where you are not accepting the ministry of our Lord and constantly being conditional in the gift of faith which you have been given. Who are you, Lord?

Jesus, tell us plainly. He has been and He was crucified. Sometimes we do not want to hear the truth. It really is as simple as that. But Jesus said that we shall know the truth and the truth will set us free. Just because you do not like it does not mean that it is not true. I teased the mailman the other day saying, "The only thing you give me is junk or a bill." He smiled. That's the truth. Few people send letters anymore. That's what emails and social media are for. The point? How often do we lament reality, going to the place of wishful thinking, and then become angry at the reality of any and all situations?

The Good Shepherd has come so that we may have life and have it abundantly. The momentary afflictions? What are they compared to what is promised. Now, momentary is seen not through the duration of life in this world, but in terms of the reality that we have been created to life forever with the Lord. Even if momentary is eighty years, what is that compared to a thousand or even a million years? This brings us back to the place where we hear that we are being formed in Christ's image and we are being made new. We do not know what we shall be, but we do know that we shall be like Christ. Therefore, let us not follow the way of the world and become emotional at the drop of a hat. Let us instead dwell in the peace of the Lord which surpasses all understanding.

Things will happen in this world which you do not like. We all know that. God's love for us is unconditional. We have heard that, but this is where our faith needs to rest. No matter what comes, we know that the love of our Savior has unconditionally been lavished upon us. Therefore, let us not be tossed about by the winds of this world. Greater is He who is in us than He who is in the world. I am not saying that we should do nothing. In fact, in following Christ you will find that He is always adding things to the list that He sets before us. You see, you who have been called in the grace of our Lord and know the promise of His salvation, you also know the world is filled with those who are chasing every direction but the one which brings life. Do all you can, as you can, knowing that all things are in the Lord's hands.

The Lord has invited us to the feast. The Lord is preparing the table before we come. We walk, for a time, through the valley of the shadow of death, but we are to fear no evil. Thy rod and staff will correct, reproof, and guide us all the days of our life. You are His sheep. You have heard His voice. You know His voice. Nothing is able to snatch you out of Jesus' hands. Rest secure in His salvation, learn to hear the call of the Holy Spirit, and walk in the faith our Savior has given you. Amen.