

Live Like You Were Dying Part 3: Embracing Eternity

We are in the middle of a sermon series titled, "Live Like You Were Dying." It is based on the Tim McGraw song of the same name. The song is based upon a man who finds out that he has a terminal disease and is asked how he will spend his last days. His response includes some extreme activities such as sky diving, Rocky Mountain climbing, even bull riding!

But it's not all just fun and games in his song.
He talks about being a better husband.
He talked about being a better friend.
He talked about spending time with his dad.
He talked about reading the Bible.
He also talks about extending forgiveness that he had been denying and loving others on a much deeper level, which will be the topic of our next two sermons in this series.

When you listen to the song, make sure you don't miss another thing he states.
In the midst of all the lyrics and in the midst of all the stated activities and priority adjustments and such.....he also talks about eternity.

And with eternity as the backdrop, he ponders the gift of tomorrow and then asks the question: what are you going to do with tomorrow?

How does the thought of eternity change your "use" of tomorrow?
How does it change what you will do tomorrow?

Some would choose to ignore eternity, (they just don't want to talk about it.)
Some would choose even to deny eternity, (they simply don't believe eternal life exists.)
This morning, I want to challenge you to embrace eternity!

And conceptually, that's only possible because of Easter!
It's only possible because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross, and what he did in the grave.

1. On the cross Jesus died for our sins.

There could not be a resurrection unless there was first a crucifixion.
The grave could not become empty unless it was first occupied.
Jesus could not come back to life, unless He first died.

Before Jesus emerged from the tomb, He was first crucified on a cross.
Unfortunately, there are some individuals who are a little confused about His death on a cross.

Speaking of being just a little bit confused, let me tell you a little story:

The Sunday school teacher gathered her children together on Easter Sunday and asked if any of them could tell the rest of the class what Easter was all about. One little boy raised his hand and she called on him to share the Easter story.

He said, "Well, first, they killed Jesus up on a cross."

"Yes they did," the teacher said.

"Then they took his body and buried it in a cave."

The teacher said, "That's right. And then what happened?"

The boy said, "And then three days later Jesus came back to life and came out of the cave."

The teacher said, "That is correct! Good job!"

But before she could say anything else, the little boy added, "But Jesus saw His shadow and went back into his cave for seven more weeks."

There is still some confusion among some concerning the death of Jesus Christ.
There is one thing that is critical that everyone must understand about Jesus' death.

Jesus' life wasn't taken from Him. Jesus willingly gave His life.

His death wasn't the result of some clever plot of the Jewish leaders.
His death wasn't the result of the incredible power of the Roman army.
His death was a willing sacrifice which He chose to make.

Early in Jesus' ministry, he explained to His disciples that He would die. But then He added:
John 10:18 Jesus said, "No one takes my life from me, I lay it down of my own accord."

Jesus made this statement long before the time of His crucifixion. His plan all along was to give His life. He did so willingly.

At the time of His arrest, when the company of soldiers came to arrest Him, we read the following:

Matthew 26:53 Jesus said, "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

But Jesus didn't call on the angels of Heaven to save Him from the cross.
He didn't ask His disciples to fight to protect Him from the cross.
He didn't try to run and hide so as to avoid the cross.

Look at Jesus' statement to Pilate during His trial:

John 19:10-11

10 "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

11 Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."

Why was Jesus crucified?

It wasn't because of the power of the Romans or the plots of the Jewish leaders.

It was because He chose to be crucified.

The question is, "Why?" Why would Jesus be so willing to die?
Jesus died on the cross because He loves you.

His life wasn't taken, He willingly gave it.
He gave it because of love.
He knows that we all sin, and that sin must be dealt with.
So, He dealt with it on the cross.
He took our punishment upon Himself. Because of love.

His sacrifice is the ultimate demonstration of His love.

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

On the cross Jesus died for our sins.

2. In the grave Jesus overcame death.

Jesus broke the bonds of death.
That is incredibly significant, for us as well as for him.
We, too, benefit from His resurrection. Simply because of who He is.

I want you to watch a little music video.
This song is written from the perspective of the Apostle Peter:

Video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbSnk1R31vg>

If someone promised that they could give you eternal life, why would you believe them?
If someone promised that after you died they could make you live again, why would you believe them?
Even if you really, really wanted to believe them, why would you, why should you, how could you believe them, without some proof.

What if you said to them, "OK. You go first. You die. Then bring yourself back to life. And THEN we'll talk."

That's the position we find ourselves in with Jesus!

First of all: Jesus offers to give you eternal life.

That's huge! That's incredible! That's everyone's dream come true!
Jesus offers to bring you back to life after you die.
Let me give you just two of the many examples of that offer:

John 11:25 Jesus said, "He who believes in me will live even though he dies."

Jesus offers to give you eternal life.

John 10:27-28

27 Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.
28 I give them eternal life."

That's a phenomenal offer.
However: Why should you believe him?

Why? Because He was willing to prove it!
Because He Himself came back to life. He said, "I'll go first."
His resurrection proves He has power over death.

Acts 17:31 "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

1 Corinthians 6:14 "By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also."

Jesus' resurrection proves He has power over death.
It's not just empty talk. It's not just wishful thinking. It's not some delusional dream.
He proved it. He went first. He died. He was buried. Three days later He came back to life.

Regarding his resurrection Jesus said,
John 14:19, "Because I live, you also will live."

Let me end with one last little story:

The third grade teacher said to her students, "For our next project, please hide in a plastic egg something that represents spring."

Among her students was a little boy named Billy. Billy should have been in a special education class. He was academically challenged. He struggled with learning. But, nonetheless, Billy was in her class and as such, he was to participate in the assignment. She just hoped that he would be able to do this one.

The students were to hide in a plastic egg something that represents spring.
The next day, 23 plastic eggs were lined up on her desk.
She gathered the students around and opened the first egg.

Out flew a butterfly.

"Yippee!" the students squealed.

"That's mine!" shouted Mary.

"What a clever idea," the teacher stated. Mary beamed.

"Now, what is in the second egg?"

It was a small rock with some green moss.

"That's mine!" shouted Thomas.

"Yes, moss does represent new life," she said, and then added, "That's an original idea."

The third egg contain a tiny flower.

"Oh, how pretty," the teacher said as she smiled.

"Flowers bloom in the spring. Good job, Nicole."

And then, she opened the fourth egg. But it was empty.

She paused for just a moment, and then quickly set it aside. The students snickered.

She quickly reached for the fifth egg, when Billy shouted out,

"Hey, wait! That empty egg was mine!"

She said, "Yes Billy. Thank you. But it's.....empty."

Billy smiled and said, "Yes. In the spring time the tomb of Jesus was empty. And it brought new life to everyone."

The teacher smiled and said, "Billy, you are exactly right!"

I wish the story ended there. But it doesn't. Sadly, Billy died suddenly just a few weeks later, from a brain tumor.

His third grade class attended the funeral.

And at the end of the service, they placed 22 plastic eggs upon his casket.

The eggs.....were all empty.

"In the spring time the tomb of Jesus was empty. And it brought new life to everyone."

Luke 24:2-6

2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,

3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead ?

6 He is not here; he has risen!

On the cross, Jesus died for our sins. In the grave, Jesus overcame death.

Jesus offers eternal life to everyone who receives Him as their Lord and Savior!

Have you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?