

Easter Sunday

Recap of Drama

Scene 1

- Young woman is enticed by a job offer
- Opportunity presents the best of what the world has: more money, nicer vehicle, more prestige, more holidays
- It is a step up the ladder

Scene 2

- An older woman is tempted to pursue an ill-advised and immoral relationship; should she acquiesce to the advances of a married man
- She thinks it is companionship, love, and fulfillment; in reality it is sin that will leave her hurting and unsatisfied
- Sin promises much, but always disappoints

Scene 3

- A mature person is confronted by Goodness personified; she is considering Jesus Christ and what he means to her life
- Despite the evil being, the devil, trying to dissuade her, in the ultimate question of life-what will you do with Jesus?-she chooses salvation in the Son of God

Life or Death

- All of these issues can be boiled down to a question of life or death
- The temptations of this world, the desire to sin, and the struggle with evil can all be considered a life or death conflict.

Despite the allure of worldly success, the Bible makes it clear that this is a futile endeavour:

1 John 2:15-17 (ESV) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And **the world is passing away along with its desires**, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Despite the appeal of sin in its many forms, it always leads to death:

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.

Despite our desire to ignore evil or deny its personal existence, there is a real adversary opposing all mankind. The Bible names him Apollyon-the destroyer:

1 Peter 5:8 (ESV) Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

- Our entire struggle in life, as depicted in the drama, comes down to a duel with death.

Winning by Losing

Recently had a reunion with football team from 1994

- Reminded of a story I had forgotten from the Churchill bowl – semi-final for the National Championship
- We were down at halftime by 3 touchdowns, in the locker room
- Star offensive player comes in furious
- He was mad because they opponent's fans were singing the "Good-bye" song
- Leafs fans will be familiar with it

What if at halftime the coaches entered the room and suggested a new strategy for winning the game...in order to defeat them we need to let them win

- Ludicrous!
- This would be preposterous in business; vying for a contract
- This would be ridiculous in relationships; to make this relationship last we need to end it
- Or parenting; to be a good parent you need to stop parenting
- "Opposite day"

Death of death in the death of Christ

As counter-intuitive as this concept is, this is what we celebrate at Easter. It has been wonderfully articulated by Puritan theologian John Owen in the title of a book he wrote called *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. Jesus understood that in this life versus death battle we have been considering this morning, death would be defeated by letting death win...by dying.

In His death, Jesus would:

- Pay the penalty our sin deserved
- Ransom our lives freeing us from the power of sin, the futility of worldly living, and the tyranny of evil powers
- This joyful accomplishment-our redemption-in unparalleled in history

Death of death + life everlasting

- Christ destroyed death; he killed death in his dying
- This victory is a 2-sided coin
- The defeat of death is also the victory of life
- **2 Timothy 1:10 (ESV)** Paul says our salvation “which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,”
- Jesus didn’t stay dead; he rose again. Thus, the death of death is also the victory of life.
- Theologian Leon Morris: ““The cross is the victory, the resurrection is the triumph...The resurrection is the public display of the victory, the triumph of the crucified one.”
- Jesus killed death in his dying, and his triumph is confirmed in his being raised from the dead

We Believe

We believe, with good reason, Christ came back from the grave

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (ESV) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

We believe he has risen...he is alive!

- Believer, if you have put your faith in Christ, you have put your faith in life itself
 - **Romans 6:8-11 (ESV)** Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

- Unbeliever, today we celebrate the work in history of Christ who triumphed over death. He died for our sins. He provided an escape from the futility of life which ultimately ends in death. He triumphed over evil.
 - **Romans 8:11 (ESV)** If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

This Easter we celebrate a risen Lord

- He is the resurrection and the life
- He offers life now, and life everlasting
- His death and resurrection defeated:
 - the power of death in sin
 - the inevitable death that living in this world leads to
 - the threat of death from evil powers
- His death and resurrection promises life everlasting

I end with Jesus' words in John 11:25-26...a promise to those who put their faith in Him

John 11:25-26 (ESV) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"