

JJ¹

There's been a terrible accident. A young man is rushed to the hospital in hopes to save his life. The doctors do all they can, but it's not enough. He's brain-dead. It's only the machines keeping his heart beating and breath in his lungs. The family makes the tough decision to remove life support.

Although his family is grieving their loss, other families find hope. This young man was an organ donor. A young woman gets a new heart to replace her own that had left her sickly and weak from the day she was born. A man with cystic fibrosis gets new lungs, and breathes deep breaths of air for the first time in 10 years. Two different people with kidney failure get a new kidney. The list goes on and on of all the people who gained new life through this one man's tragic death.

Events such as this take place every day throughout our country and around the world. It begins to point us to the truth Jesus reveals to us today. The truth that **OUT OF DEATH COMES LIFE.**

The events of our text today take place just after what we'll hear next Sunday—Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Jesus is approached by some Greeks who seem to have converted to Judaism and were in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. They approached Philip asking,

“Sir, we want to see Jesus.” We're never told that Jesus granted their request. Whether they were brought to Jesus or not, Jesus goes off on a farming lesson to teach everyone listening on the Temple mount that when it comes to seeing him, it really isn't about what *we* want to see in Jesus, but what *he* wants us to see. And so he says, “The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, Amen, I tell you: Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it continues to be one kernel. But if it dies, it produces much grain.”

It doesn't matter whether it's wheat, corn or anything else, it's amazing when you think about the order God has made in his creation. A seed has to die first before it produces a plant. And depending on the type of plant, hundreds, even thousands of more seeds are produced! **OUT OF DEATH COMES LIFE!**

Jesus knew this wasn't just the case for wheat. He knew it was true of him. That's the very reason why he was born into this world! But how shocking to consider that truth. The purpose of Jesus' birth into this world was the complete opposite of our own. Jesus was born to die! We are born, and yes, we end up dying, but dying isn't our purpose. Dying is the result of our sin. God created us to live. Remember what Moses' wrote when he described the

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for “Jesus Help”. It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

creation of Adam? Moses tells us that God breathed into Adam “the breath of life” (Gen. 2:7), not the “breath of death.” But for Jesus you have to flip it around. Jesus took on human life so that he could die! He inhaled the breath of life so that he could willingly exhale his breath in death!

While the young man I described at the beginning of our sermon was able to give new life to people through his death, it wasn't done willingly. He certainly would have preferred to not have been in that terrible accident and died. And what's more, that life he gave to those other people through the donation of his organs only delayed the inevitable. All those people he helped would still eventually die.

That's where Jesus is different. Jesus said, “But if it dies, it produces much grain.” You see, friends, Jesus didn't want to be the only seed on the wheat plant of eternal life. Jesus wants to live with us and all people in his heavenly home. But in order for that to happen, he knew he would have to pay for our sins which separate us from our God and his eternal home. That's why he said, “Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’?” Jesus, in his human soul, is filled with anguish at the

thought that in just a few short days, suffering beyond imagination would be thrust upon him. And this agony that filled his soul wasn't just the fact that he would physically die. That was probably minor compared to what truly vexed him.

Jesus was going to die with every sin and every last ounce of guilt pressing on his soul. The Curse was going pierce right into his heart and crush out his life, and not just his physical life. No, it was going to destroy his spiritual life. He wasn't just going to become sinful on the cross, he would actually become sin! (2 Cor. 5:21)



But then his divine nature, in a sense, overcomes his anguish and his boldness returns and declares, “No, this is the reason I came to this hour.” Everything in his life over the last 33 years has been leading to this one point. Everything

he has done, he has done to prepare himself to do what couldn't be done. To undo the damage Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. To undo the work of Satan throughout all the centuries since then. He wouldn't stop because he knew that **OUT OF DEATH COMES LIFE.**

Friends, that's what Jesus wants us to see when we look at him, but that's not all he wants us to see. After talking about his

life, he talks about our own. "Anyone who loves his life destroys it. And the one who hates his life in this world will hold on to it for eternal life."

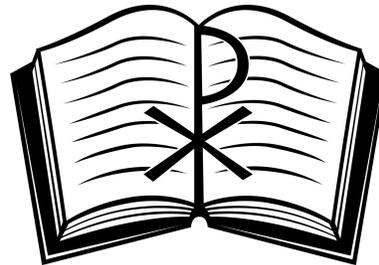
When Jesus talks about loving and hating our lives, he isn't talking about it in the way we might usually talk about our lives. Jesus is talking about how, by nature, we sinfully and selfishly love ourselves and would much rather live for the now than live a life expectant of eternity. He's talking about how we naturally like to be our own boss. We like to do whatever we think is in our own best interests. Our sinful nature always asks, "What can I get out of this?"

We see this as we look at the ways we often act like babies. Babies cry and scream: "Feed me!" "Change me!" "Rock me!"

By nature, things don't change with age. We let the world, the devil and our sinful hearts convince us that following Jesus takes too much time and energy away from what we want. It reveals itself as we cry, complain and scream: "When is it going to be my turn?" "When will I get recognition?" "What am I going to get out of this relationship...this job?" "What about my feelings?" "What about what I want?" and it goes on and on.

It's so easy for us to be a bunch of naval-gazers. The beautiful thing is, Jesus gives us a new way of looking at things.

Through his death, new life is given to us. Through faith in Jesus and his sacrifice, we have eternal life, and a new life to live now. Through faith we are able to see that life isn't all about me. That's why Jesus said, "If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him." In fact, the life we once loved isn't so appealing anymore when we see the new life God has given us to live and all the blessings that come with it. The old life begins to die as we learn to hate it and want nothing to do with it. The life we get through faith in Christ means the dying of our sinful nature.



And notice I said *dying*. In this life, we'll never be rid of our sinful nature, but were also not trapped by it any longer. We're given the strength and desire in

our heart of faith to say "NO!" to temptation. We're able to see our graves, not as the exit from life, but as the entrance to the grand palace of real life in heaven! To grow in that strength and certainty we must continue in God's life giving Word in order to continue to put to death our sinful nature. And one day Jesus will pull the plug on that sinful nature. He'll do that the day he calls you home to his side, to perfectly live the life he always meant for you to live. On that day, out of your own death will come eternal life.

It wasn't a terrible accident. It was all planned out from eternity. A young man was quickly crucified on a cross in the hopes of silencing his life-giving Word. His heart stops, and life leaves his body. His enemies thought they had won. But out of the death of this young man comes life because he is the Resurrection and the Life! The man, Christ Jesus. He was lifted up so that the devil would be cast down off his earthly throne and into the eternal fires of hell. He did this for your sake and mine that we would share in his heavenly glory. Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

Artwork by Ian M. Welch—Copyright 2013 Ian M. Welch. All Rights Reserved. paramentics.com

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture is taken from: The Holy Bible, Evangelical Heritage Version™ (EHV™) copyright © 2016 The Wartburg Project. All rights reserved. www.wartburgproject.org