

“Dying Daily”
Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19
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Let us pray together.

Jesus Christ our living God, on the Cross you show us that you are indeed the God who dies. In this first Sunday of Lent, grand us, grant us your faithfulness so that we could follow you faithfully to the cross. Amen!

Good morning again friends!

Our scripture readings in this first Sunday of lent. We might not suffer very difficult truth. The truth that we our modern society have tried our best not to talk about, in fact this is the truth that we don't even want to think about. Yes! it is, the truth about the certainty and the universality of our death.

Today's scripture readings talks about this hard truth that we're all going to die someday, and that there is nothing we could do to escape from it. As Saint Paul says in the Romans text that we've just read today. That, exercise dominion to all. Indeed death is not a subject that we want to talk about in our daily life, because it is terrifying to talk about death. It goes really against our need for control. Our society don't really talk about it anymore. The thing that someday all of my accomplishments, progress and my search for meaning will be loomed by death. The thing that this strong and healthy body that we have today will someday soon or later will decay.

The thing that will be physically separated from the people that we truly love. Oh! That is indeed is terrifying. This is why perhaps since the earliest of days even until today people have never stopped to try finding ways to overcome death. To find the so called fountain of youth. To find immortality. Now when you listen to it this may perhaps sound like a like things from science fiction. Right! But believe it or not, these days overcoming death has increasingly become the focus of real science.

You know several years ago the Bank of America made a lynch. Predicted that one of the biggest investment opportunities over the next decade will be the companies that work to interrupt theft. This is not a financial advice let me let you. 10 years ago in 2013 one of the biggest company in the world 'Google' already launched a biotechnology company called 'Calico' whose goal it says this whose goal is to solve death.

There are also numerous other biomedical and technological company that are currently, and seriously working to radically extend human lives using latest technology and techniques. There's even a start-up. I don't know if you've heard about this before it's called 'Loyal'. This startup company called 'Loyal' is currently in the clinical trial

stage of developing anti-aging drugs for dogs, so that dogs can live forever. And the plan is to apply the same science to human beings.

Friends, if you have to be honest, all of us would agree that death is indeed terrifying. So, it begs the question, how should we make sense of death, as Christians? Does becoming Christians make any difference at all in how we understand death. Many Christians like others simply deny it don't talk about it you know don't think about it and perhaps quietly hope that if we believe in Jesus Christ, do good and make sure to go to church every week even when it's snow, and then if we you know just do what, or obey whatever the Bible says then maybe someday will go to heaven, have an eternal life.

You see, you hear that we talk about eternal life as if it is just a Christian word for immortal life. We often cling to the idea whether we realize it or not, cling to the idea of heaven as just another form of living an immortal life. But this attitude towards death I think is unhelpful. Because while we now put Jesus Christ in the picture, get our primary focus more often than not, it's still about the search for immortality.

Our primary focus still revolves around our idolatry for youthfulness, for immortality, for living forever. And not only that it still doesn't answer our fundamental question about how do we make sense of our common universal human experience of death, as Christians. It's a, it's a question that you think you know the answer because you read the Bible and you attend Good Friday meetings and understand about Easter so much. But it still begs the question.

If Jesus Christ has truly defeated death on the cross why then our bodies must still decay. If Jesus Christ has defeated death on the cross, why then do we still need to die? And I think this is precisely what the season of Lent, try to help us understand. You know season of Lent is not simply about reminding us that someday you will die, therefore live wisely. No! When the priest or minister you know mark our foreheads with ashes on Ash Wednesday, it's not simply to remind us of our mortality.

If the only purpose of the season of Lent is only to remind us that we will die someday, then Jesus Christ again doesn't even need to be in the picture. You know my mom often called me, make sure you get vegetable right son! I don't want you to be like so and so you know he almost died, while you know, he got heart attack. No! Lent is not about that, it's not about reminding us simply about our mortality.

So what, So what is the purpose of the season of Lent? Maybe the season of Lent is an invitation for us to see our death in the light of Jesus Christ. You see, if we are to make sense of our death only from the story of the first Adam alone, then yes that means nothing but bodily decay and destruction. If it's only from the story of the first Adam alone, then yes! that means a tragic failure of human life.

And indeed death does not make sense and needs to be overcome. But we have the full story, haven't we? We know that even Jesus Christ the fully divine, and fully human has willingly chose to die on the cross to defeat death. Let me say it again, we know the

full story that Jesus Christ the true Adam the second Adam, the fully divine and fully human has willingly chose to die on the Cross to defeat death. Therefore we could now then make sense of our death as nothing less than grace.

Through the death of Jesus Christ we could then see our own death as an inseparable part of the resurrected life. Think about it could Jesus defeat death by any other means other than the cross? Off course! He could do whatever pleases God. Yet the gospel clearly tells us that Jesus Christ the Jesus Christ willingly chose to defeat death not by avoiding it, but by embracing it, by dying on the Cross. So really, Lent is an invitation for us to see death not from the story of Adam alone. Yes! The story that tells us about that as merely decay and destruction, Lent is an invitation for us to see that there is greater story of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the true Adam.

Yes! the story tells us about death as a means of grace, as the mean of resurrection, and human flourishing. If because of Adam every human death becomes mark of sinfulness, a mark of condemnation, in Jesus Christ every human death has now become a mark and approved of God's Grace. Before Jesus Christ every time people died, every time something dies, you will see sinfulness there. You will see condemnation there. But since Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ the fully God and fully human died under Cross, now when you see someone die when you see something die you should not and you cannot see it other than a proof of God's grace.

This is why in the season of Lent, we are invited to embrace death, to embrace our mortality. For if this is true that Jesus, this the fully divine, and fully human shows us perfectly what it means for God to be God, and shows us perfectly what it means for human to be fully human, then we must also say that by willing to die on the Cross Jesus shows us that to die is both to be fully human and to be God like.

Let me say that one more time. If it is true that Jesus the fully divine and fully human God shows us perfectly, what it means for God to be God, and shows us perfectly what it means for human to be fully human, then we must also say that by willing to choose to die, choose to die on the Cross Jesus shows us that to die is both to be fully human, and to be like God.

This is why starting from the Cross every death is now no longer become a mark of sinfulness, but he has become a mark of God likeness. By dying on the Cross, Jesus radically redefined the meaning of death system starting from the Cross. Every death should no longer be understood apart from the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. And it is precisely because of that reason that we should not avoid our death or our mortality.

If God has gladly choose to die on the Cross in order to defeat it, then we too should desire it gladly, even in our living. I know this can be confusing. How on earth can we desire death while we're still living? Not only how can it be possible, but how does it look like? What is, what does it really mean anyway? Does death mean that we should just eat nothing and let ourselves die?

Off course no! We're not talking about selfish death here. Perhaps to desire death while we are living, means to consider everything that we have, everything that we have accomplished, everything that we search for, Yes! even our life on earth as nothing but a big pile of garbage, if it is a part from Jesus Christ.

Yes! perhaps it is to die to ourselves for the sake of Christ, because the apostle Paul says something like that actually. He says more than that, "I regard everything as a loss, because of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord."

For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him. And listen to this carefully. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like Him in His death. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings in His death.

By becoming therefore for Paul he could say something like this, "for me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Paul did you hear that? I want to know Christ and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him, it is death. Paul is desiring death even while he was still breathing. Friends! Death has a new meaning here. From now on, death is no longer about your sinfulness. Death is no longer about the punishment. From now on death is about becoming like God. This is grace, this is an invitation for us to become like God. This is a calling, a highest calling.

Do you remember the story of Peter? After he denied Jesus Christ, and then Jesus Christ died and then He rose again, and Peter for the first time again, remember that story? And then and then what happened, Jesus asked Peter, right Peter. Son of Simon, son of Jonah do you love me and I feed my sheep. And Jesus says something here, that you will die, basically Jesus telling Peter that you will become a martyr.

At that time if I was Peter I will cry so bad, not because I'm sad but because I'm so happy with the privilege that God gave to be like Him. It's highest calling for Peter. So friends, from, because of the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross every death, every single death on this world is nothing but a Grace, but an invitation of becoming like God in His death, so that we could rise with Him.

This is not a selfish kind of death, because under Cross Jesus shows us what his death truly means. It is a self-giving death for the sake of others. It is the death that can be done daily even while we are living. You know I remember one day when I first decided to study theology right after my high school you know my older brother whom you met few weeks ago bought from me a book. It's a historic book that talks about the lives of many Christian figures during the first 300 years of Christianity. You know where these twelve disciples and then Polycarp, Justin martyr, Timothy and many others.

One thing that struck me at that time was that all of them died because of persecution, they all died as Jesus followers, they all died as martyrs. While reading it, you know being a young Christian, very passionate, wanted to study theology at that time, while

reading it but to admire these people who were willingly and gladly, gladly chose to die for something, for Christ.

And I as I admit I also cannot help but to somehow have this desire inside my heart to be martyr as well. Now you got to understand that I was you know very young blood Christian at the time. I wanted to die for Jesus Christ. You know, but this memory came back to me while reflecting on this topic of death and somehow it makes me wonder could it be that perhaps, that martyrdom is not only a call to a specific group of special people, maybe every Christian, maybe every, each one of us is called to be martyrs.

Maybe being a Martyr is not so much about how we die you know being killed or being persecuted. Maybe martyrdom is about us choosing to die to ourselves daily and choosing to follow Christ daily to the Cross. Yes! even if it means giving up our life and our body. And if you think about it that way, maybe marriage or having kids is a kind of martyrdom because we chose daily to lay down our lives for the beloved others, maybe baptism in fact, it's a kind of vow to accept our vocation of Martyrdom.

I don't know! But here's what I know in this first Sunday of lent we are invited by Jesus Christ once again. To accept His call for us to walk towards the Cross with Him. We are once again invited to accept Christ all towards our daily martyrdom. For it is only in our willingness to do so that will become more and more like Him. We chose to die on the cross and it is only in our willingness to do so, that God promised that we will rise with Him once again.

May it be so!

Amen!