

To Live Is Christ, to Die Is Gain

Sermon Text: Philippians 1.18b-26

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. ²⁰ I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

1.) Regardless of the circumstances, how is a Christian always guaranteed deliverance? (cf. the sixth petition)

2.) List some ways that we “exalt Christ” in our bodies.

3.) Evaluate: A Christian should want to die and go to heaven rather than stay here on earth.

First Lesson: Psalm 116

1 I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.
2 Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.
3 The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me;
I was overcome by trouble and sorrow.
4 Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, save me!”
5 The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.
6 The LORD protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, he saved me.
7 Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.
8 For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling,
9 that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.
10 I believed; therefore I said, “I am greatly afflicted.”
11 And in my dismay I said, “All men are liars.”
12 How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me?
13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.
14 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.
15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.
16 O LORD, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant;
you have freed me from my chains.
17 I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD.
18 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,
19 in the courts of the house of the LORD—in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD.

1.) In the opening verses the Psalmist describes how he was in a dark place. What are some dark places in life? What recourse is always available to us?

2.) How are we encouraged to respond to God's gracious rescue? (v. 7, 9, 12-19)

3.) Verses 10-11 are difficult and appear out of place. What truths had the Psalmist come to realize in his post-deliverance self-reflection? (cf. Prov. 3:15; Heb. 12:11)

Second Lesson: Luke 7:11-17

¹¹ Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. ¹² As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.”

¹⁴ Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” ¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶ They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” ¹⁷ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

1.) Why was this widow's grief particularly bitter?

2.) Why would Jesus return this young man's soul back from the best place to this place?

3.) It is not wrong to weep and mourn in response to a loved one's death. How does this account dry our tears?