



50 YEARS
TRINITY LUTHERAN
CHURCH & SCHOOL
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Beautiful Words
Of Death and Life

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8 1 Cor 15:5-58
John 11:1-44
November 3, 2024
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Old Age, and all the changes it brings to our bodies: *aches and ailments, pain and difficulties*, remind us that death and dying are realities; and they are coming sooner rather than later. Growing old, and the changes in our bodies, *is ultimately a call to repentance!* All of those changes are the result of sin: sin in the world; sin in our lives; sin in our bodies.

King Solomon knew that. King Solomon is the Teacher of Israel in the Old Testament, the wisest man ever to live on earth. One of the last inspired things he wrote was a fantastic poem about growing old and dying in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is one of the most beautiful sections of the Old Testament; here is what King Solomon wrote:

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth,

BEFORE *the days* of trouble come

and *the years* approach when you will say,

"I find no pleasure in them"—

2 **BEFORE**

→ the **sun and the light and the moon and the stars** *grow dark,*

→ and the **clouds** *return* after the rain;

→ 3 when the **keepers of the house** *tremble,*

→ and the **strong men** *stoop,*

→ when the **grinders** *cease* because they are few,

→ and **those looking through the windows** *grow dim;*

→ 4 when the **doors to the street** are *closed*

→ and the **sound** of grinding *fades;*

- when **men** *rise up* at the sound of birds,
- but all their **songs** *grow faint*;
- 5 when **men** are *afraid* of heights
- and of **dangers** in the streets;
- when the **almond tree** *blossoms*
- and the **grasshopper** *drags himself along*
- and **desire** *no longer is stirred*.

ECCLESIASTES 12:1-5

These are all vivid descriptions of the *aches and ailments, pain and difficulties* of growing old. No one is exempt; sin affects us all and old age catches up with everyone of us. When you see weakness in your body, **it's a call to repentance!**

Solomon continues his beautiful poem, as if taking a deep breath of resignation, he solemnly writes about death:

Then man goes to his eternal home
and mourners go about the streets.

6 Remember Him— **BEFORE**

the silver cord is severed,

or **the golden bowl is broken;**

BEFORE

the pitcher is shattered *at the spring,*

or **the wheel is broken** *at the well*

ECCLESIASTES 12:5-6

The poem is beautiful; it has powerfully vivid and graphic images; it is well written and accurate ... but there is a huge problem with it: **it offers NO HOPE whatsoever.** If a beautiful poem is all we have, then we are lost forever. According to the poem, we live our lives -- *and they go by so quickly* --- and all we have to look forward to is *aches and ailments, pain and difficulties* **before we die.** No wonder King Solomon calls all this “*Vanity of Vanity, the ALL is Vanity and chasing after the wind!*”

To find **hope** in the midst of growing old and facing death and dying, you have to look to the “*One Greater than Solomon*¹.” The *One Greater than Solomon* is Jesus, the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Solomon was wise, but all he could do is describe *growing old* and *death and dying* and **call us to repent**. Jesus, the *One Greater than Solomon*, has the words of eternal life!

God the Father sent His Son Jesus into the world to save us from death. Jesus took all of our sin and its punishment upon Himself, including death itself. Jesus Himself died, suffering terribly on a cross, for us and in our place. He was placed into a cold tomb with a heavy stone rolled to seal it up. But yet, death could not hold Him. **On the Third Day, Jesus Christ rose from the dead!** He has destroyed the power of death and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, you are set free from death! Jesus has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light! He Himself is *the resurrection and the life, He who believes in Him will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Him shall never die!*

There are other beautiful and vivid words in Scripture; this time written by the Apostle Paul, a 1,000 years later, written in the style of a taunt of an enemy:

"WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR VICTORY?

WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR STING?"

The **sting of death** is sin,
and the **power of sin** is the Law.

¹ This is one of the ways that Jesus refers to Himself in Matthew 12. Jesus, the wisest Man of all as the incarnate Son of God, speaks the words of eternal life and gives us HOPE as we grow old and face death and dying. The “One Greater than Solomon” Himself died, and rose from the dead on the Third Day. He has destroyed the power of death over us; and in His resurrection brings eternal life to all who believe!

But thanks be to God!
He gives us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 CORINTHIANS 15:55-57

You may have to go through old age, with its *aches and ailments*, *pain and difficulties*; and then face *death and dying ...* but you do so with **hope**²! You have **Hope in Christ** Who has risen from the dead and gives you the promise of the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting!

- † Hope allows you to *patiently endure* all the changes in life;
- † Hope gives you *peace and assurance* as you live each day; and
- † Hope *anchors you* to Christ and His Promise of eternal life!

Today we remember our loved ones who have travelled through death and dying and into eternal life. On this All Saints Day we remember that those who Hope in Christ **live** – they are alive now, with Christ, awaiting the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day! Our loved ones who died in Christ had hope: *confident faith* in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting!

So with them, we echo the words of St. Paul:

**"WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR VICTORY?
WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR STING?"**
But thanks be to God!
He gives us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 CORINTHIANS 15:55,57
Amen!

² Hope is CONFIDENT faith in Christ and His Promises. Be sure not to understand this word 'hope' as we use it in English, such as, "I hope the Diamondbacks win the baseball game tonight." In English there is no confidence and no assurance wrapped up in the word hope, it's more like a good wish. The word 'hope' in Scripture is full of confidence and assurance; there is no question about it. Hope is based on God Himself, and not the things of this world. So when we say we have the "hope of the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting," *it is the same as saying*: "there is no question whatsoever about it; I will most certainly rise from the dead and live forever!" Hope is an expression of your faith in Christ!

God the Father, we thank You for Your Son and His Resurrection from the dead. Send the Holy Spirit, so that we may firmly believe in Christ and place our hope in His Promise of the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. Be with us through the changes of life, even when death and dying approach, so that we may remain faithful to You by trusting in Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. It is in His Name that we pray, Amen!

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”;² before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain,³ in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed,⁴ and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low—⁵ they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets—⁶ before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern,⁷ and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.⁸ Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

1 Corinthians 15:5-58

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55 “O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

John 11:1-44

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

⁵Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” ⁸The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” ⁹Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees

the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." ¹¹ After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." ¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." ¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

²⁸ When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴ And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." ⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."