

"ARE YOU ON THE RIGHT OR THE LEFT?"

{Hebrews 9:27}

Trinity Presbyterian Church

April 20, 2008

I was on the phone with Vincent Arishvara the other evening and we were talking about the people who have died in the last several weeks and how it's affected our psyche. He said, *"We're in a Season of Death!"*

I never thought of it that way, but indeed we are. Like it or not, the death rate is still 100%.

We're all going to die...and it is now that we make the necessary preparations for when that day comes.

Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes...

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die...whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account...God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed!" {3:1-2a, 15,17, NIV}

There are two verses found in the Book of Hebrews that I've chosen for my text this morning. I read from the contemporary Message Bible...

"Everyone has to die once, then face the consequences. Christ's death was also a one time event but it was a sacrifice that took care of sins forever. And so, when He next appears, the outcome for those eager to greet Him is, precisely, salvation!" {9:27-28}

In the Daniel passage read earlier we heard...

"There will be a time of trouble, the worst trouble the world has ever seen. But your people will be saved from the trouble, every last one found written in the Book. Many who have been long dead and buried will wake up, some to eternal life, others to eternal shame!" {Daniel 12:1-2, MSG}

There are three points I want to make this morning...

- ✚ DEATH IS A CERTAINTY
- ✚ JUDGMENT IS A REALITY
- ✚ SALVATION IS A POSSIBILITY

I. DEATH IS A CERTAINTY

Medical science has done wonders in extending our lives. The life expectancy in the United States gets higher every year. There was recently a report that said before too long people may live to be 125 or even 150 years old. Imagine that! No wonder there is some concern over the depletion of Social Security. It is not unusual for someone to live to be 90—or even 100. But, in the end—we all will die!

I always have been intrigued by the Biblical account of Methuselah's life...

"...Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died!" {Genesis 5:27}

That says it all—no matter how long you live, in the end the result is the same...you die!

The Bible says...

“Everyone is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment!” {Hebrews 9:27, NIV}

Death is no respecter of persons—rich, poor...gay, straight...young, old...we all face the inevitable!

Some years ago I officiated at the service of a 25 year old athlete who died unexpectedly of a heart attack. Shortly thereafter I was asked to preside over a service for a 103 year old man who had died. Vincent recently officiated at a service of an 8 month old.

The point is this we will all one day die and no one has the guarantee of tomorrow.

It was James who wrote—

“Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanished. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’” {4:13-15, NIV}

Today is the most important day of your life!

...yesterday’s gone forever—you cannot undo your actions

...tomorrow may never come

...so what you do today is paramount—make the most of it!

As we saw on the video earlier, there are those who say, “Well, I’m going to put my life together before I die!” The question is...when? If we were given a 30 minute warning buzzer of when death is coming that might possibly work. But no one knows the time or the hour; therefore...NOW is the time to make a decision to follow Christ and get your life in order!

Do you KNOW for CERTAIN that if you were to die today that you would go to Heaven? If not, NOW is the time to settle that issue once and for all!

So, death is a certainty for all...and...

II. JUDGMENT IS A REALITY

There’s a day coming when we will all stand before God! And, what’s the criteria of His judgment? You’ve heard me speak of this over and over, but I must state it once again to you this morning—

“...the Son of Man will take His place on His glorious throne. Then all the nations will be arranged before Him and he will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats, putting sheep to His right and goats to His left.

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Enter, you who are blessed by My Father! Take what’s coming to you in this kingdom. It’s been ready for you since the world’s foundation. And here’s why: I was hungry and you fed Me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave Me a room, I was shivering and you gave Me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to Me.

“Then those sheep are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever seek you sick or in prison and come to You?’

“Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was Me—you did it to me!’

“Then He will turn to the goats, the ones on His left, and say, ‘Get out, worthless goats! You’re good for nothing but the fires of hell. And why? Because...I was hungry and you gave Me not meal, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, I was homeless and you gave Me no bed, I was shivering and you gave Me no clothes, Sick and in prison, and you never visited.’

“Then those goats are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or homeless or shivering or sick or in prison and didn’t help?’

“He will answer them, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you failed to do one of these things to someone who was being overlooked or ignored, that was Me—you failed to do it to me!’

“Then the goats will be herded to the eternal doom, but the sheep to their eternal reward!” {Matthew 25:31-46}

Are you with the sheep...on the right?

Or, are you with the goats...on the left?

That day will be too late to make a decision to follow Jesus Christ!

Friends, **death is a certainty...judgment is a reality...but, praise God...**

III. SALVATION IS A POSSIBILITY

The second part of that verse in Hebrews offers incredible hope...

“Christ’s death was also a one time event, but it was a sacrifice that took care of sins forever. And so, when He next appears, the outcome for those eager to greet Him is precisely, SALVATION!”

Just as all are destined to die once; so, Christ also died once for all time with sin.

For all who have placed their faith and trust in Him—received Him as Savior—declared Him Lord of their life—they can face death with total confidence.

...for the unbeliever, facing death bring terror

...for the one who knows Christ death brings the hope of resurrection—eternal life!

Christ dealt with the problem of our sin on the cross and settled it once and for all. All we need to do is rest in Him...trust Him...and receive Him!

Paul wrote of this in that Corinthian passage read earlier this morning...

“But, let me tell you something wonderful, a mystery I’ll probably never fully understand. We’re not all going to die—but we are all going to be changed. You hear a blast to end all blasts from a trumpet, and in the time that you look up and blink your eyes—it’s over. On signal from that trumpet from heaven, the dead will be up and out of their graves, beyond the reach of death, never to die again. At the same moment and in the same way, we’ll all be changed. In the resurrection scheme of things, this has to

happen, everything perishable taken off the shelves and replaced by the imperishable, this mortal replaced by the immortal. Then the saying will come true: 'Death swallowed by triumphant Life! Who got the last word, oh, Death? Oh, Death, who's afraid of you now?'

"It was sin that made death so frightening and law-code guilt that gave sin its leverage, its destructive power. But now in a single victorious stroke of Life, all three—sin, guilt, death—are gone, the gift of the Master, Jesus Christ! Thank God!

With all this going for us, my dear, dear friends, stand your ground. And don't hold back. Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for Him is a waste of time or effort!" {I Corinthians 15:51-58, MSG}

I think William Barclay sums this all up so very well—

"If in that day Christ comes as a friend, it can only be a day of glory; if He comes as a stranger or as one whom we have regarded as an enemy, it can only be a day of judgment. A person can look to the end of things with joyous expectation or with shuddering terror. What makes the difference is—'How is your heart with Christ?'"

My biggest challenge is to prepare you to be ready for that day. How is your heart with Christ today? Are you certain you will go to Heaven if you die today? If not, don't leave here this morning without experiencing the living Christ personally.