

Luke 24:1-8

You're Going to Die, Here's How to Deal With It

In the Name of the One who lives triumphant from the grave,

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Living Lord Jesus,

You're going to die, here's how to deal with it. That was the headline of an article online that caught my attention recently. The headline piqued my interest enough to click through to the article. Because hey, death is inevitable. It comes to the people we love. One day, it will come to each of us, too—unless Jesus comes back first. So an article entitled, “You're going to die, here's how to deal with it” is certainly something that's timely and relevant for each of us to consider. The article proceeded to offer all sorts of advice on ways for a person to ease their anxiety about death. ***Have open conversations about dying. Get your paperwork in order. Declutter and downsize now so that others won't have to do it later. Don't wait to achieve your goals. Don't put off reconciling with people from whom you're separated.*** All very practical ideas. All missing the point.

If you want to know how to deal with the inevitability of death, dear friends, don't look to anything .com! Look to the empty tomb. That's what we're going to do today. Yes, you're going to die, ***here's*** how to deal with it.

First of all, forget everything you thought you knew about death. I know that's hyperbole, but understand that for the Christian, dying well means believing that there's more to all this than what we see with our eyes, hear with our ears and experience in our lives. What do you expect to see when you go to a funeral? You expect friends paying their respects. You expect loved ones trying to hold it together. You expect there to be a body.

That's what you expect, because that's what you've experienced. That's what the ladies were expecting in our text, too. ***On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.*** Together with all those spices—that they would gently pack in linen strips and then wrap tightly around the body—together with those spices they brought their expectations. They'd been to funerals before. They thought they knew how this funeral was going to go. So with heavy hearts, the next of kin walk up to see the body one last time and say their final goodbyes. Only when they arrive, there's no body. ***They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.***

But...he was dead! The Romans were not novices at killing people. They did it every single day and knew how to kill people until they were really, really dead.

Plus, the ladies saw him die on Friday. They saw him pierced with a sword that drew blood and water from his side. They saw his lifeless body carried down from a cross. They saw him put in the tomb. They saw that he was actually dead. But with Jesus, what you see with your eyes doesn't tell the whole story.

So it is at the funerals of those who die in Christ Jesus. You may see friends coming to pay their respects. You may see grieving loved ones trying to hold it together. You may see a body. But your eyes don't tell you the whole story. And they certainly don't tell you the best part of the story.

Because of Jesus, because of Easter, everything that death was supposed to be has gone right out the window. Sin and death went hand in hand. Already in Eden God said to Eve ***“If you eat of that tree, you will surely die.”*** The theme runs throughout Scripture. ***“The wages of sin is death.”*** ***“The soul that sins is the one that will die.”*** And that's you. And that's me, right down to the very last uncharitable thought, right down to the very last selfish motive, right down to the very last complaint muttered under our breath. Death is our lot because of sin—and not just the end of our earthly existence, but the beginning of an eternal punishment in hell. That's what you would rightly expect. The grave is where we were ***supposed to*** get what we deserve. But instead, the grave is where the believer gets what Jesus deserves, what the child of the gracious God deserves—heaven,

forever. Instead of closing our eyes in death and opening them again to see...even greater death. We close our eyes in death and open them to see...Jesus. Leave it to our Greatest Friend to take the devil's greatest weapon and use it as the believer's greatest blessing. So forget everything you thought you knew. What you see at the believer's funeral is not the believer—it's just a body, just a shell. Don't look for the living among the dead! There's a lot more going on there than meets the eye.

So you're going to die, here's how to handle it. Forget everything you thought you knew about death. And remember what he told you. In the heat of the moment, the ladies needed help remembering. *Suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you... 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'"* Then they remembered his words.

He said it was going to happen and then it happened! You can only do that if something is in within your power to effect and accomplish. For example, if I blurted out that the Brewers were going to go on a 12 game winning streak or that it was going to be 80 degrees every day this coming week—all I could do in the wake of those bold, outlandish promises would be to sit back and nervously wait to see if they'll actually happen. Those things are outside of my control. I can't make them happen. On the other hand, if I promised that I was going to eat way too many of those Reese's peanut butter eggs this afternoon—that's something I can make happen all by myself. When I say the time has come, the chocolate must listen! (Don't tell my doctor or my wife.)

If you say it's going to happen and then you make it happen, you must have the power to control things. So when Jesus promises, "The grave will not hold me." And then it happens...you and I get the message. Even death is under his control. Even death has to listen to him and obey what Jesus says.

You're going to die, here's how to handle it. Remember his words. The devil will try to make you forget. He'll show you your list of sins, miles long, repeated offenses for decades on end, secret repulsive thoughts, openly disgusting deeds, he'll show them all to you. But remember Jesus' words. Remember how he told you. "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of your sins."

The devil will show you the yawning pit of the grave, he will point with bony finger and cackle that your final bed has been made up for you. But remember Jesus' words. Remember what he told you. ***"He who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."*** Death will not be the end of you, dear Christian. Because Jesus is the boss of death. Because he lives, you too will live in heaven with him.

I'm not so naïve as think that dying is ever easy or that coping with the death of someone dear is a breeze. It's not easy, but it is inevitable. Believer or not, faith-filled or not—it's something every person must face. Isn't it better to face it with Jesus? Isn't it better to face it with a Savior who lives, who's conquered death for you? It's thoughtful to declutter now so that others won't have to later. It's smart to have your paperwork in order. But if you really want to be prepared to die, believe in Jesus. Forget what you thought you knew. And remember his words. You're going to die. That's you handle it. Amen.