

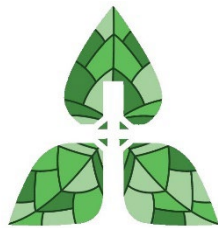
How To Die Well

A seminar on aging, dying,
and the promise of resurrection.

Part 1: To Live is Christ

Part 2: To Die is Gain

Part 3: We Mourn with Hope



Cross of Life

Cross of Life Lutheran Church

Part 1: To Live is Christ

Opening Devotion: Psalm 71 (selected verses)

¹ In you, LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame. ² In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me; turn your ear to me and save me. ³ Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. ⁴ Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel.

⁵ For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth. ⁶ From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you. ⁷ I have become a sign to many; you are my strong refuge. ⁸ My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendor all day long.

⁹ Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone. ¹⁰ For my enemies speak against me; those who wait to kill me conspire together. ¹¹ They say, "God has forsaken him; pursue him and seize him, for no one will rescue him." ¹² Do not be far from me, my God; come quickly, God, to help me. ¹³ May my accusers perish in shame; may those who want to harm me be covered with scorn and disgrace.

¹⁴ As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. ¹⁵ My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds, of your saving acts all day long— though I know not how to relate them all. ¹⁶ I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone. ¹⁷ Since my youth, God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. ¹⁸ Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.

¹⁹ Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens, you who have done great things. Who is like you, God? ²⁰ Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. ²¹ You will increase my honor and comfort me once more. ²² I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, my God; I will sing praise to you with the lyre, Holy One of Israel. ²³ My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you— I whom you have delivered. ²⁴ My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long, for those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion.

Numbering Our Days

Why do people fear aging so deeply? List as many examples as you can.

Psalms 90:12 says, “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

- How is Moses teaching us to think about our mortality?
- Why might mortality make us wiser?
- (If you're older than 50) What did you think of old people when you were younger? How has that opinion changed? How does that make you want to relate to younger people today?
- (If you're younger than 50) What kind of old person do you want to be someday? What are you doing today to grow towards that goal?

Proverbs 16:31 says, “Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.”

- Our culture often measures a person's worth by usefulness, productivity, independence, or beauty. How does this text challenge those assumptions?

- Gray hair is only a crown if one lives a righteous life. What are some spiritual temptations that can especially affect people as they age?
- Why do you think our culture values youth so highly? When that attitude seeps into a church, what can be the result?
- The reality is that in most churches in North America today, there are more people over 50 than under 50. How should that shape how we see the role of older people in our churches today?

Titus 2:1-8

¹ You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. ² Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. ³ Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴ Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. ⁶ Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. ⁷ In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸ and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

- According to your station in life, why do you think Paul said what he said about the challenge of being the age/sex you are?
- Who is responsible for action in this section?

- How can older Christians pass on wisdom, instruction, and encouragement without becoming overbearing? (Consider this from both a male and female point of view)
- What are the greatest challenges to enacting this vision for a beautiful, biblical relationship between younger and older members of a church?

Getting older means your relationship with your church shifts...

- What responsibilities do younger Christians have toward older Christians in a church? Consider 1 Timothy 5:1-10.
- Visitation (Homebound/Hospital)
- Please communicate!
- You are a blessing because you are an opportunity to serve.

A Closing Reflection

The Bible describes the Christian life as “running a race.” When a runner is getting close to the end of a race, he will often increase his pace because he knows the end is near where he can finally rest. What would it look like in your life to not just merely grow older, but to finish the race of life faithfully?

Write your response here...

Part 2: To Die is Gain

If someone asks you to explain what happens when you die as a Christian, how would you explain it? (Think, pair, share)

Look at the following texts (in groups) and write down what we can learn about what happens when we die.

- Philippians 1:21–25, 3:20–21
- 2 Corinthians 5:1–10
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18
- Revelation 21:1–8, 21:22–22:5
- 1 Corinthians 15:35–44, 51–57

Discussion...

- Why does it matter that we are going to be raised bodily?

- Why do you think people often think of heaven in vague spiritual terms rather than in physical terms?

Dying Without Fear

John 11:35 tells us that at the tomb of Lazarus, “Jesus wept.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13 (above) tells us that we “grieve,” but not like those “who have no hope.”

- How might Christians overstate the joy of the resurrection?

Hebrews 4:15 describes Christ’s resurrection as “freeing those who...were held in slavery by their fear of death.

- How does this passage clearly state the nuance of a Christian’s view of death?

- What are some things you fear about dying?

- Why do modern people value “control” so highly at the end of life?

- How do we distinguish between preserving life and trying to control death?

- What makes end-of-life medical decisions so emotionally difficult?
- How should a Christian think about Medical Assistance in Dying (MaID?)

Call the Elders (Pastor)

James 5:13–16 (NIV)

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

- What should a person expect of their pastor at the end of life?
- Why do you think people often avoid or delay calling their pastor when they are sick or near death?
- What sorts of things would you like to hear from your pastor when you're nearing death?

Leaving Peace Behind You

- What expectations do you think you need to clarify with loved ones before you're nearing death?

- What things do you need to make sure you say before you near death?
- What legal things do you need to take care of right now?
 - Will? POA? Medical Directives? Passwords/documents?
 - Have you considered including your church/synod in your will?

Final Reflection...

If you were on your deathbed tonight, what are the two things you would want to be sure were taken care of?

Part 3: We Mourn With Hope

John 11:32–44 (NIV)

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ Then 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 have kept this man from dying?” ³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” ⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

- What do you notice about what Jesus does before he raises Lazarus?

- What makes Christian grief at death different from the grief of a non-Christian?
- Who is our life, death, and resurrection about?

The Christian Funeral

- The Christian funeral is about _____.
- The Christian funeral is for _____.

PLAN YOUR FUNERAL

- The order for Christian Funeral is on page 274 in our hymnal.
- What Bible texts will be read? Which one will be the sermon?
 - Suggestions:

▪ Job 19:23–27	▪ John 5:24–29
▪ Psalm 23	▪ John 6:35–40
▪ Psalm 46	▪ John 10:11–18
▪ Psalm 90	▪ John 11:17–27
▪ Psalm 121	▪ John 14:1–6
▪ Psalm 130	▪ Romans 5:1–11
▪ Isaiah 25:6–9	▪ Romans 8:18–39
▪ Isaiah 40:28–31	▪ Romans 14:7–9
▪ Lamentations 3:22–33	▪ 1 Corinthians 15:12–58
▪ Daniel 12:1–3	▪ 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10
▪ Matthew 11:25–30	▪ Philippians 1:21–23
▪ Matthew 25:1–13	▪ Philippians 3:20–21
▪ Luke 23:39–43	▪ 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

- 2 Timothy 4:6–8
 - Hebrews 4:14–16
 - 1 Peter 1:3–9
 - 1 John 3:1–3
 - Revelation 7:9–17
 - Revelation 14:13
 - Revelation 21:1–7
 - Revelation 22:1–5
- What songs will be sung?
 - Remember, these are not to be sentiment, but proclamation.
 - Sections of the hymnal that have good songs for funerals:
 - Hymns 510-584
 - Hymns 678-693
 - Hymns 797-853
 - Hymns 880-894
 - Any special elements to the service? Remember, these ought to draw attention to Christ, not to you.
 - Complete the worksheet on the following page.

FUNERAL PLANNING WORKSHEET

Name:_____

Scripture Readings

Old Testament:

Psalm:

Gospel:

Epistle:

Hymns / Songs

Themes or Emphases

What truths would you especially want proclaimed at your funeral?

- ☐ Resurrection of the body
- ☐ Forgiveness in Christ
- ☐ Baptismal identity
- ☐ Eternal life
- ☐ Christ's victory over death
- ☐ God's faithfulness through suffering
- ☐ The hope of heaven
- ☐ Other:

Funeral Participants

Pallbearers:

Scripture Readers:

Musicians:

Other:

Obituary / Biography Notes

Important details or themes you would want included:

Final Reflection

What do you most want people to remember about your faith in Christ?

At The Graveside

- While it is not required by Scripture, burial rather than cremation has been the traditional practice of Christians who value their body as a gift from God and who confess the resurrection of that same body. Are you considering cremation? If so, why? Are those reasons ones that honour God's gift of your body?

- Christian Funerals also include a Committal at the graveside (or equivalent). The Pastor leads the gathered in a short liturgy, including a singing of the Common Doxology “Praise God from whom all blessings flow...”

Luke 2:29–32 (NIV)

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”