

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

December 4, 2020

“To Die is Gain”

“For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Paul, Philippians 1:21

This has been a sobering week. Dane Scott’s father, Daniel, passed away on Monday and then Dennis McAdams, long-time, beloved member here at Folsom, passed away on Tuesday. (Please keep Dane and family and Eleanor and the McAdams family, including the Mains and Eckert’s, in your daily prayers.

The sadness is real, the loss hard to bear and tears will flow. But because these men were lovers of God and faithful followers of Christ, there is reason to rejoice. Sorrow over the death of a Christian is one-sided, all on the side of the ones left behind. The Christian who has died is not really “dead.” I know this because Jesus himself said it: “...everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11:26). He said it to Martha, and then asked her a question: “Do you believe this?”

Do **you** believe this?

Believing this changes everything. It means we do not grieve as others do, who have no hope (I Thessalonians 4:13). But also, if we can get over our fear of death, we will view things from an entirely different perspective. It’s not that we will, all of a sudden, decide we don’t want to live any longer but it will change *how* we live. It will change what we talk about and how we talk about it and how we approach circumstances — even a pandemic.

For the apostle Paul, a fear of death didn’t seem to enter his mind. He said plainly, “to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). He wasn’t running out in front of chariots trying to hasten his demise, but his lack of a fear of death allowed him to experience life to the fullest. Yes, the life he chose to live came with a huge dose of suffering, but because it was suffering for Christ, he suffered gladly. He could rejoice in spite of it.

“Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.” *Philippians 2:17-18*

We know this about Paul, but does it change the way we think? Mark Twain said there is nothing more an-

noying than a good example. Paul was a human being like us, yet seems to be a superhuman example. He was constantly on the move, constantly teaching the gospel, constantly facing down opposition and constantly suffering for it (see the list of things he suffered in II Corinthians 11:23-28). No wonder he could say “to die is gain”! He knew what was on the other side of the dying experience. Listen,

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Philippians 3:20-21

Paul was unique, no doubt about it. None of us has a résumé as impressive as Paul’s. But the glorious end of death is not reserved to the Pauls of the world, or we’d all be lost. Note that he says to those ordinary, imperfect citizens of Philippi to whom he writes, “our citizenship is in heaven... and Christ will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body...” That describes the future of *every* faithful Christian.

Paul was a stunning exception to the rule; he was not “ordinary,” but most of us are, and God knows that. Heaven is for both the great and the small lover of God.

A morbid fear of death is more deadly than Covid; it’s a disease. The prescription is “to die is gain.” We can use a big dose of that prescription right now. It will change everything.

We apologize for any confusion we might have caused by the survey we sent out, but we are *not* meeting inside the building on Sunday. Please tune in to the livestream on YouTube at 10:30 Sunday morning. We’ll be talking about some of the challenges facing us as a church and some things on the horizon that give us hope.