

Invite Jesus To Your Funeral

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the power of inviting Jesus into our darkest moments, whether it's feeling hopeless, facing death in various aspects of life, or even in our ultimate funeral. It highlights how Jesus has the ability to bring life, hope, and purpose into situations that seem impossible, urging listeners to invite Him into every area of their lives.

Scripture: Mark 5:41, Luke 7:14, John 11:43, Romans 8:38, Matthew 11:28

Topics: "Hope in Darkness", "Inviting Jesus into Our Lives"

Description

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Transcript

This is a special night tonight because I really feel the presence of the Lord here in the sanctuary and in the service in a very profound way. And there's a specific call, as we heard with Philip's testimony tonight, there's a specific call to people who feel hopeless, who feel like there's no way out, there's no way forward. It seems like death is literally surrounding you.

You don't know what you're going to do. You don't know how you're going to get through tomorrow. The circumstances against you are so ominous that you don't know how you're ever, ever going to get through it.

Let me just give you a few examples of so many that have been reading online today that have come in from around the world. Here's Hannah from Brooklyn. She says, my family and I have drifted away from the Lord.

And so much so that my sister is being held at Rikers Island for a very serious crime that she didn't do. And Sweden, somebody writes in and says, my depression in life is so dark. The only solution is that I'm begging for death.

I don't want to live anymore. Life is too dark. And from New Australia, Steve says, I'm unable to live in victory.

My wife left me and it's broken me. My children are rebellious. I'm a Christian, but life feels like it's in a downward spiral.

Please pray for me. There are just so many people in situations exactly like these that I've read to you this evening. And I want to, I want to suggest something to you.

It's a message the Lord put on my heart. And if I, if I had a title, I would simply call it invite Jesus to your funeral. Invite Jesus to your funeral.

Now it's not as light as it seems. Jesus Christ had a tendency to wreck every funeral that he attended. You notice that in the Bible.

He never went to a funeral where he didn't raise the dead person. And if you want your funeral to be destroyed, then just invite Jesus to it. We're going to talk about that for a little bit tonight and that we're going to believe for life.

We're going to believe that people are going to online and in the sanctuary, wherever you are, that there's going to be life come into your situation. So father, I just want to thank you for giving me this thought, Lord, this week, and you have confirmed it over and over and over again, all throughout the service. Those who don't even know they confirmed it.

Just the scripture readings, everything. God has confirmed everything you've spoken to my heart this week. Lord, you are desirous to do something in this generation that is so far beyond us.

It's beyond our thinking. God, it's out of the realm of our own ability. It's something that you have initiated and you are simply looking for us to invite you into whatever situation of death it is that we're facing.

Whether it's death to family, death to hopes and dreams, our self-image has died. Whatever it is, God, we want to invite you, Jesus, tonight to our funeral, whatever it is, because you have a tendency to raise the dead. So Lord, we want to thank you tonight.

God, I thank you for the anointing of your spirit. God, I don't stand here with any amount, any professed amount of ability. God Almighty, I recognize who and what I am without you, but I know that with Christ, I can do all things.

So father, I thank you for the anointing of your spirit and I'm asking you tonight, Lord, to reach out beyond the words that I bring. Reach out through the internet and God, speak life into darkness and speak life into death. And father, we thank you for it and we praise you for it in Jesus' name.

Amen. I love the fact when I read about Jesus attending a funeral in the New Testament, he upends every funeral and you'll find that he casts out the scorners and cancels the mourners everywhere he goes. Even though the people have everything down, they're quoting their scriptures, they're singing their songs, they're crying their tears.

The moment Jesus comes on the scene, everything changes. And the good news tonight for everyone who's listening online as well as here is that he is the same yesterday, today and forever. He does not change.

We do and we try to create new circumstances perhaps where we think he can't work like he used to do, but he doesn't change. He does the same thing that he's always done. Let me give you three quick

examples.

In Mark chapter five, you don't have to turn there, there was a ruler of the synagogue who just called for Jesus because his 12-year-old girl was sick at home and dying. En route to this house, word came to Jesus and those with him that this little girl had died. And he said to the people, don't be afraid, only believe.

When they walked into the house, you know, there's a little girl, she's probably laid out on a bed or wherever it is that they placed her. And the mourners and scorers are all there. The scripture says he walked into the house and he says, don't be alarmed, she's not dead, she's only sleeping.

And the scripture says they laughed him to scorn. They, you know, basically saying we know she's dead, she's not breathing, her heart's not beating. And he said, no, she's not dead, she's only sleeping.

Now, the scorers wouldn't believe, and there's scorers everywhere in society who just don't believe that Christ is able to do anything in a situation that they believe is impossible. So the first thing he did is he cast the scorers out of the house and he sent them outside. As a matter of fact, he told the people in the house, after raising her from the dead, don't tell them what you saw here today.

There's something about scorning, there's something about when people scorn the power of God, they're left outside of the realm of what God is able to do. And I love the fact that, you know, the fact that the little girl is sleeping, it speaks to me on different levels. Number one, a lot of young people are sleeping, sound asleep to the presence of God.

They're asleep in a sense to the purpose of God for their lives. A lot of young people are not aware, maybe listening to me tonight, and you're just not aware who has come into the room. You're not aware of God's presence, you're not aware of God's purpose for your life.

As a matter of fact, you're just, you're completely asleep to the reason why you were created in the first place by God, and to the purpose that God has for your life. And to you tonight, Jesus says the same as he said to this little girl, he just looked at her and he said, little girl, I say to you arise. And this little girl got up, and this is what I'm believing God for tonight for some children that are listening online, children that are sitting in their parents' home, maybe tonight or with your guardians or your friends, you're listening to this tonight.

And Jesus himself, the Bible says he's omnipresent. Now what that, that's a big word, but what it really means is that he is everywhere. There is nowhere that Jesus is not in this world.

So that means he's actually in the room with you right now, not just my voice, not just here in Pennsylvania or online, but he's actually in the room. The thing is that you are asleep, some of you are asleep to the fact that he's there, and he has a divine purpose for your life. And then he just speaks to you, if you will let him speak to you.

And he says to you, little girl or little boy, whatever the case is, I'm telling you to get up. And the scripture says the little girl arose, and when she arose, he said, give her something to eat. Now that's not just a coincidence.

In other words, I've got a journey for you, little girl, and you're going to need strength on this journey, so I'm going to provide for you the strength that you need. You're going to need physical strength, I'm going

to give you the physical strength, and I'm going to give you the spiritual strength you need to finish the journey that I've set out for your life. Now there are a lot of people in this generation that are scorning the presence of God among children.

They scorn his presence in our school system, and much, not all, but much of the school system maybe in our generation is filled with scorers, mocking the presence of God, unaware that the presence of God is actually there. Mocking his presence, mocking his ability, laughing him to scorn, telling these children that it's hopeless, don't believe in God, don't believe the promises of God. Well I want to suggest something to you today, that we need to pray again in our time that God cast the scorers out of our school system, and get them away from our children, our sons and our daughters.

And I say it without reservation, I say it without apology. Father in Jesus' name, we're asking you again tonight, cast the scorers away from our children in this generation. Those that are trying to keep our sons and our daughters from finding their full purpose and their potential in God.

Lord, cast them out, and open the ears of these children, and begin to speak to them, and say, little boy, little girl, I say to you arise, and give them what they need for the journey. We ask you, Jesus Christ, invade our school system, invade our grade schools, invade our public schools. God Almighty, enough of the scorers, enough of the death, enough of the mockery.

We ask you tonight to invade these places, and speak directly to our children, and raise them up to their divine purpose, their appointed purpose. We invite you, we invite you into this place of death. We invite you, Lord Jesus Christ, into this place where our children's ears have been closed by scorers in the room.

God Almighty, we invite you into this place, and ask you, Lord Jesus, to speak to them, and raise them up, and use our sons and daughters for your glory. Luke chapter 7, there's another situation where Jesus is walking into a city with his disciples, and there's another group that are walking out, and the scripture tells us it was a widow, and this was her only son. So this is her whole family.

She has nobody else. She's lost her husband, there's no indication she has any of her relatives. This is everything.

This is her heart. This is her home. This is everything, and it's the type of a person who's coming out of the city, and grieving, and mourning, and there's a funeral here, and she's lost her future.

It seems like her family is gone, and Jesus encounters this funeral, and he stops this funeral procession. He sees the cry, and the heart of this particular mother, and he says to this boy, he says, young man, I say to thee, rise, and the scripture says that this young boy came back to life in this funeral procession, and he began to speak. Now this is an amazing word, because the word that's used in the original text for speak, it means speech ascribed to God.

In other words, he started speaking under the power that God gives you to speak. It's the type of, they shall speak with new tongues. They will be given a new heart.

They'll be given a new mind. They'll be given a new spirit. Let me give you an example of this.

Many years ago, there was a young lady on our staff in New York City at Times Square Church, and very godly young lady, and she came to me one day, and she said, Pastor Carter, she said, I have to go home

to St. Louis. She said, my brother is in a gang. My sister is in a gang.

These are street gangs. My sister's in a gang. My brother's in a gang.

My father's in jail, and my mother's in really bad condition. She said, I'm the only believer in my family. She said, I feel like I have to go.

I'm losing my whole family, and I feel I have to go and at least make an attempt to do something, and the Lord gave me a word for her, and I told her, I said, you stay right where you are, and here's the word that God gave me. I said, the anchor holds the ship. The ship doesn't hold the anchor.

I said, you stay planted right where God has put you, and the ship may swirl around in a circle because of the winds and the tides, but the anchor will hold it, and eventually, it'll come right to where the anchor is, and I felt it was a word from the Lord, and based on that word, she stayed where she was, even though it looked hopeless. Brother in a gang, sister in a gang, father in jail, been jailed, actually been in jail for much of his life, and mother on drugs in a terrible situation. Well, long story short, those two came to Christ.

I remember her brother coming to church, and I remember him sitting in his seat with kind of a curious look on his face, and I remember when he came to Christ, and he came to here to our Bible school, and he graduated after two years. I remember his sister then coming to Times Square Church, giving her life to Christ, and coming to Summit International School of Ministry and graduating from our Bible school. I was there when her father came to Christ.

I preached her father's funeral, hallelujah, to the Lamb of God, and guess who was there at the funeral to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ? Her mother was at the funeral to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. You see, he is able to bring back to life those things that we think we've lost, those things that we think we are dead. You hold firm.

You hold firm tonight. You might be the only one who believes in God in your family, and you might think that your family's got a death sentence on it, but I want you tonight to invite Jesus to that funeral. You invite Jesus to come in.

Say, Jesus, you're welcome to come in. You're welcome to change whatever you want to change, and I love the fact that this boy sat up, and the scripture says he started speaking as God speaks. You think about the brother and the sister, and I got a chance to know them in the school, and from street gangs in St. Louis to speaking as God speaks in a Bible school, to speaking the things of God.

Don't tell me miracles don't happen in this generation. Don't tell me that God doesn't raise the dead. I don't believe it if you try to tell me that.

I've seen it too many times. I've seen too many miracles. Praise be to God, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, and to see her dad after spending almost his whole life in jail, sitting in the house of God, worshipping God, to preach at his funeral.

Praise be to God. John chapter 11, there was a man who gave up on himself. His name was Lazarus.

Not only did he, he probably gave up just before he died, as Phil tried to tell us tonight, and not only he gave up, but everybody around him gave up on him. They're quoting, even the people quoting scripture have given up on him. His sisters have given up on him.

All his friends have given up on him, and they've put him in a place, and they've rolled a stone in front of him, and everybody's saying, leave him there, leave him there. Everybody knows somebody like that, or maybe that's who you are tonight. You just feel like, like everybody's given up on me, and I've given up on myself, and I feel like just everybody wants me to stay where I am, and I have no desire to be anywhere other than what I've become, and everybody's saying, just leave him there.

There's only one person saying, bring him out, and it's Jesus Christ, the son of God. He's the only voice in the whole scene that's saying, no, don't leave him there, bring him out, bring him out, bring him to me. Come unto me, all you labor and are heavy laden.

Come unto me, and learn of me. I'm meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest for your soul. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Come to me. This is the cry of Jesus. Come to me.

There's no death. There's no power of hell. There's nothing of darkness that can hold you when I call you.

I've created you. I have the power, Christ would say to you, to bring you out of darkness. I want to encourage you tonight.

If you've, if you've pronounced your own death, invite Jesus Christ to your funeral, and watch what God will begin to do. Now, last but not least, this is very dear to my heart. It's, I want to encourage you to, you're going to have an actual funeral one day.

Everyone here, you are, you know, unless a nuclear bomb hits us, then you probably won't. You'll be dissolved, but barring that, you're going to have a funeral. People are going to be in a place like this, and you're going to be all decked out, you know, and they're going to be in your box, and you'll be here, and we'll all be crying and singing, and you're going to have a funeral, and I want, that's the ultimate invitation.

When you invite Christ to your funeral, when Jesus Christ bears witness to who you are, that you belong to him, when, when, when, when Satan says, well, have, have you heard of the thoughts that he or she thought, or the things they might have done, or the things they might have said, and you know, if you could step up, sit up in your casket and say, I just want to bring something to your attention, devil. I invited Jesus to my funeral. The Son of God is at this funeral, and Pastor Nick read the scripture tonight.

He said, he that did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not freely with him also give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? Who? If Christ has, it is God who justifies, who is it who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who's even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall persecution, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For as it is written, we're for your sake killed all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. I don't know about you tonight, but I have invited Jesus Christ to my funeral. The day I die, I will not be alone here.

Christ will be here. The presence of God will be here. I will not be dead.

I'll be very, very much alive. I will have abandoned this old shell of a body, and I'll be at the throne of God. I'll be singing.

I'll be shouting. I'll be dancing. I'll be giving God glory with everything that's in my heart.

Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. Because I chose to invite Jesus Christ to my funeral. I chose to let him be my Savior.

I chose to believe that I could not save myself, and as such, he came and died on the cross, and paid the price for my sins. I chose to open my heart to him, and confess him as my Lord and Savior. I invited him to my funeral.

And the day you open your heart to the Son of God, that's the day you invite Jesus Christ to your funeral. That's the day when Christ bears witness. That's the day there's no mourning in my funeral.

Folks, I want dancing. I want clapping. I want shouting.

I want glory, because I won't be here anymore. Praise be to God, and I'm not under the voice of the condemner. Hallelujah to the Lamb of God.

Glory to the name of Jesus. Glory, glory, glory, glory, glory. I wrote a song years ago for my funeral.

It's called I Won't Be Crying For You. It goes, I'm feeling that soon I'll be gone. I hear Jesus calling me home.

At the end you'll be there, and you'll all be blue, but I won't be crying for you. No, I won't be crying for you. I won't be crying for you.

So strike up the band, sing out a tune, because I won't be crying for you. I'll be standing with Christ at the throne, and praise God at last I'll be home. With the angels I will sing unto Jesus my King, and I won't be crying for you.

Now it may seem callous, but true, I won't be crying for you, because over there, not a tear, not a care, and I won't be crying for you. No, I won't be crying for you. I won't be crying for you.

So strike up the band, and sing out a tune, because I won't be crying for you. Hallelujah, hallelujah, because I've invited Jesus to my funeral. And tonight online, it's the biggest and best decision you'll ever make in your life.

You see, when you get to the end, you're now just at the beginning of eternal life with God, because you opened your heart, and you invited Him to be your Lord and Savior through this life, through the valley of the shadow of death, and into eternity. You did it by admitting you couldn't save yourself, by believing that He took your place on the cross, and by confessing Him as Lord and Savior with your mouth. And when you invited Him into your life, you also invited not just eternity, but you invited the abundant life that comes with the presence of God.

And we talked about that tonight. You invited Him to begin to speak about your future, and give you the strength you need for your future. You invited Him to bring your family into places of victory that is impossible apart from God.

You actually invited Him into the death of your dreams, your family, your relationships, and you watched the healing that God will begin to do. I have lived, I've seen it. It's been absolutely amazing, the healing that God can do.

You just hold firm. The anchor holds the ship. The ship does not hold the anchor.

You stay anchored in Christ, and you watch one after another your family, your brothers, your sisters, your mom, your dad, your sons, your daughters, your cousins even start coming to Christ. It's amazing. I've lived to see it.

And you'll just see it as you hold firm. And then you invited Him to bring you out of every place of death and hopelessness, as Phil shared tonight, everywhere where you don't think you have a future. And maybe even others agree that you don't have a future, but there is one that doesn't agree with that assessment, and that is the Son of God.

He has a future for you. He has a divine purpose for your life. And if you will invite Him into that place of death in your life, He will bring it back to life again.

I am the resurrection and the life. Did I not say to you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God? You would see that which only God is able to do, if you would believe. And so tonight, I want to invite people who are listening online, if you've never received Christ as your Savior, oh God Almighty, I don't know what else to say.

I beg you. If I have to, I will. I'm not too ashamed to beg you, because it's the best decision you'll ever make.

It's the only decision that takes you into eternity with God. Jesus Christ Himself said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. And no one, no one comes to the Father except through me.

You can't get to heaven through good works. You can't get there through church attendance, as good as that is. You can do good deeds, and you can't get there.

You can't get there by just being a good person. As wonderful as being a good person is, it can't get you into heaven. You need a Savior.

And so I challenge you tonight with all my heart, just open your heart and don't be afraid. I'm going to lead you in a prayer, just a real simple prayer. And I want to encourage you, just make it your own prayer.

Make it your own words. If mine are insufficient, then let it be your own words. But let it sound something like this, and say it after me right now, okay? Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for loving me.

Thank you for giving me the promise of forgiveness, and life, and a reason to live. Tonight I open my heart as best as I know how, and I invite you into my life to be my God, my Lord, and my Savior. You're not ashamed of me, Jesus, so I won't be ashamed of you.

I will tell others that I've given my life to you, and you are now the God of my life. I believe that because of Jesus Christ, my death is turning to life. My darkness is turning to day, and my morning is turning to dancing.

God Almighty, thank you for loving me. I believe that heaven will be my home when I'm done on this earth, in Jesus' name. If you just prayed that, if you really meant that, I want you just to text the word DECIDED to 51,000.

Just text the word DECIDED, 51,000. You know at Times Square Church on Sunday morning and Sunday afternoon, 323 people did that. Did you know 323 people did what you're doing right now online? They decided to follow Jesus.

This is starting to happen on a much bigger scale in our time, and I thank God for it, I do. Because sometimes the best work of God happens when the day seems to be the darkest. We want you to know we love you, and we want to help you get started in your walk with God.

We can give you advice as to where to find a good church, or how do you start reading your Bible. There's lots of stuff we can help you with. But let's do this together.

Let's walk together. Let's cancel your funeral. Hallelujah.

Let's just cancel it, and let's rejoice instead. Can you imagine the widows outside the city of Nain? She's dancing, and her kid is talking God talk. She's probably never heard him talk that before that way.

Who knows? Maybe he was a trash-talking teenager. Who knows what he was? But when he was raised from the dead, he started speaking as God speaks. That's what the scripture says.

The little girl, can you imagine? There's dancing in the house, and oh daddy, mommy, I heard the voice of God. I've got a purpose and plan for my life, you know. The scorners tried to tell me that God couldn't help, but he came anyway, and he spoke to my heart, and he told me I was just sleeping, but he woke me up, and now I have a purpose in life.

Can you imagine? Imagine Lazarus coming out of the grave, and there would have been dancing in a graveyard. I mean, I don't know about you, but if I was Lazarus, I'd probably be inclined to dance in the graveyard as soon as they unwrap me, and I would have just let loose. And the joy that must have been there in the presence of all the skeptics and doubters and scripture quoters when somebody invited Jesus to their funeral.

Praise be to God. I hope tonight you invited him to yours, because he's the author of life. He doesn't do funerals, folks.

He just doesn't. He just can't handle it. He raises the dead.

That's the reality of who he is.

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