

Death Leads to Life

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes that true life in Christ comes through the process of dying to self and embracing God's will.

Duration: 24:38

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:24, John 12:20-26, John 12:32

Topics: "Death"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of dying to oneself in order to produce new life. He references the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey, which marks the beginning of the final week of his life leading up to his crucifixion and resurrection. The speaker emphasizes that we cannot die to ourselves on our own, but rather it is a process that God works in us. He encourages the audience to surrender to God's work in their lives and to trust in His plan, even when facing difficult circumstances.

Transcript

I want you to look at a passage of scripture in chapter 12 of John and we're going to read an interesting part here in the beginning of Jesus's final week of life. Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration paid a visit to Philip who was from Bethsaida in Galilee and they said, sir we want to meet Jesus. The King James has it famously, sir we would see Jesus.

We want to meet Jesus. Philip, one of the twelve, told Andrew about it and they went together to ask Jesus. Jesus replied, now the time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory.

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels, a plentiful harvest of new lives. Those who love their life in this world will lose it.

Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity. Anyone who wants to serve me must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me.

Now this comes on top of the beginning of John 12, which is called the Easter passage, triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, final week of our Lord's life. Then the betrayal, the crucifixion, resurrection three days later. As they come into Jerusalem, they put him on a donkey and he rides in and the kids are yelling,

everyone's making a loud noise.

The crowd wants it quieted down, you know how it is. People who have no faith don't like enthusiasm about Jesus. You ever notice that? Enthusiasm about football, enthusiasm about lasagna, enthusiasm about rice and beans, everything, roti, they're enthusiastic.

But when someone gets enthusiastic about Jesus, then it's like, what are you, a holy roller? What are you, crazy? So that's what Jesus was dealing with as he came into the city. He gets into the city and all of those passages in the Old Testament about Messiah, some of them were fulfilled right then about them saying, Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. So he gets there and now certain Greeks or Gentiles who must have been converts to Judaism or what they called righteous Gentiles who had attached themselves to the monotheism of the Jewish religion, one God, not a thousand like the Roman Empire.

They come up and they see his disciples and they said, sirs, we want to see Jesus or the King James, sir, we would see Jesus. They tell that to Philip, Philip goes to Andrew, then Philip and Andrew come to Jesus. So this is at the triumphant moment of his earthly life.

Meanwhile, they have plotted to kill him. Meanwhile, he's escaped out of certain spots and God just protected him. They didn't kill him before his time.

Been a lot of hatred, lying about him. But this was the moment of the most public acclamation. Everyone's screaming and yelling, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

And these Gentiles come and say, sir, we would see Jesus. I was telling people earlier today that in historic churches that have wooden pulpits usually, in these pulpits, famous pulpits, there's one in Boston, historic church where D.L. Moody preached once in the 1890s before he died. Written only to be seen on this side was that verse, sir, we would see Jesus.

And it's a reminder to the ministers who are sitting up here, they're going to introduce you. That verse is looking at you. In other words, the people want to see Jesus.

They don't want to see you. You cannot help them. So present Jesus.

So it's a kind of ministerial thing where ministers and churches remind one another, it's about Jesus. Sirs, we would see Jesus. We want to see Jesus.

Then they tell him that, oh, the Gentiles are coming. And maybe for a moment flashing before his mind is, oh my goodness, my hour has come. I'm going to be glorified now and one day there'll be not just Jewish people worshipping me, but my life's going to be given for Gentiles too.

Gentiles, guys, is anyone who's not a Jew. Then the Lord comes out of nowhere saying, now the hour has come that the Son of Man will be glorified. The shouting just ended as he entered Jerusalem.

Everything is on the up. And then he comes with this verse which is very powerful, very searching, and the secret to so much of what we miss in life that God has for us. He said, well, they want to see me.

Now my hour has come. So listen, disciples, a seed, any seed, corn, apple, tree, whatever, a seed, unless it's planted in the ground and dies, it has nothing. It can do nothing because it's just a seed.

I could put it on the pulpit. It's just a seed. Nothing.

Hardly any weight. But if you put it in the ground and the dirt covers it and the darkness surrounds it and rain comes upon it and the sun shines during the day, unless that happens to that seed, it abides alone. It's worthless.

But once it's planted and it dies, it can bring forth many kernels. It can bring forth a huge tree just from a tiny seed. Because in the seed is this germ of life, whatever the life might be, apple tree, corn, wheat.

But you'll never know the fulfillment and the potential realized of the seed until it goes in the ground and dies. Death brings forth life. He was speaking of himself.

As long as I'm walking around with you and teaching and praying for people and all of that, I can be a blessing. But my potential, what I'm called to do to give life to the world, that can only happen by me being planted in the ground, which is a picture of his burial in the ground. Then he goes and says along the same line, anyone who loves their life, their self-life and doesn't want to die, I want my way when I want to have it.

I want my thing. I don't know about God's will. I want my way.

He said anyone who loves their life in this world will lose their life, their true life. But anyone who hates their just surface life and discards it and lets it be buried and die, then it will find and enjoy real life. You get it? I'm going to say it one more time because this is not simple.

It is simple, but it's deep. Unless a kernel, a seed, is planted in the ground and dies, it's all alone. Once you plant it in the ground, just wait.

Don't go digging it up. It has in its own self the power to bring forth much fruit and other seeds that go on and on and on. Likewise, whoever loves their life in this world and wants to hold on to their self-life will lose their real life.

But anyone who will let that old life go to the processes and plans of God, then they will experience real life. And then he said, and if you follow me, if you believe in me, you have to follow me because where I am, you got to be too. And he's not talking about going to Kenya or some part of the earth.

He's talking about the dirt, the earth. So let's unpack that just for a moment. Unless a seed dies, it can't bring forth fruit.

So how does a seed give forth fruit? First, you got to plant it in the ground. It's buried. Who sees it? Nobody.

In fact, people walk on it. It's cold sometimes. It's covered by darkness.

There's no light. And as it is in the ground, the shell of the seed begins to disintegrate, i.e. it dies. The disintegration of the shell is the dying of it.

It's no longer what you put in the ground. But when it disintegrates, the germ of life that's in it, that apple tree, peach tree, now it begins miraculously to begin to sprout and push its way up through the dirt. And we're eating corn on the cob or whatever because some seed was planted in the ground and died.

No death, no life. What's happening all around us as the fall comes? What's happening to all these leaves on the trees? They're dying. Go look at them in December and January.

But ah, from that death, April, May will come new life. Death must always precede life. Even with Jesus, he couldn't give salvation to the world unless he first died.

So I want to say to you, that's one of the processes of God that we often fight against. God wants Glenn and Marie White to reach all their divine potential because the Spirit is in them. The Word of God is in them.

Call it what you will. But it's not released until the shell dies. The shell has to break down.

That releases then the life that's in the seed, the life that's in us. So God is ordering our lives, all of us. I'll give you a little example, mine maybe later, but here.

It's all of us. He's letting circumstances happen so that your shell breaks down. Your ego is crushed.

People hurt you. People dismiss you. People don't care about you.

And there's a dying to ego, to pride, to self. And we like almost fight against it, but it's God's plan because unless the seed is planted and dies, it can't bring forth life. Paul says that the apostle, in one of his letters, guys from Teen Challenge, he says, okay, I'm going to prison, all that stuff, just killing them.

You talk about a shell being broken. In prison, beaten, this, that. He said, death works in me, but life in you.

Because by my dying and being crushed, then God's ministry in me is released. And I speak with power and I have anointing and God leads me. So death is working in me, but life is working in you.

So a lot of us want life, we just don't want the death. How many are with me? We want, oh God, do a new thing, but I don't want to die. I don't want to die.

I'm not going to die. And today in America, this would be the last message you hear in a lot of the televangelists and the prosperity people and all of that about your best life now and all that foolishness. Your best life is not now, it's coming in heaven.

How many are happy our best life is coming in heaven? Okay. No, you can't preach this. You can't tell people unless a seed is planted and dies, it won't bring forth life.

Who will want to tune into that? Well, I don't care if you tune in or I don't tune in. How many know it's the truth of God? Just lift up your hand. It happened with Jesus.

Jesus couldn't give forth life until he died. So how would you and I escape that process? No, I'm just going to speak that word, speak all the words you want, and that has its place. But the real secret of every man and woman that God has ever used, come up to my office, I'll show you a lot of biographies and autobiography, crushed, mocked, forgotten, disappointed, heartbroken, been walked out on, don't know what to do, and the shell is just absolutely disintegrating.

And then when it's all broken, boom, the life of God begins to come out, the fruit of the Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit. As you walk with the Lord, you treasure that process even though it's not comfortable.

God's working on you.

He has you in disintegration school. He is going to use, notice, how did Jesus die? How did he get buried in the grave? Did he do it himself or did people do it to him? People did it to him. You can't die to yourself.

I'm so full of Jim Cymbala that how could Jim Cymbala kill Jim Cymbala? I won't. I'll spare a little part. I'll hack away for a while, but I'm going to leave a little piece there, you know? You just put yourself in God's hands and say, Lord, I'm not going to fight against the circumstances of life.

You know, the devil does attack and we're to resist him, but a lot of other things are happening in life ordained by God to break me, to break my shell, to break my shell. Oh, I could tell you so many stories because I got a very hard shell. God just breaking, disintegrating.

So last night coming home from a hockey game, I went to see with my son James. We walk right by the building on 543 Atlantic Avenue between 3rd and 4th that I started on. And I thought of this meeting tonight and I looked in there.

In fact, I think my good friend Sammy Ortiz is here and he would be there when sometimes just two or three people would be for the prayer meeting. His mother would be one and then a woman named Sister Seymour. There was only two people and my sermons were bad and there was no money to pay the bills.

You talk about your shell being broken? And the harder I tried, the worse it got. Even with the two ladies in that little building, I would hold a microphone and try to act like a preacher. Praise God.

How are you saints? Saints? There's two ladies over there. What are you talking about? Why don't you just call them up? Why don't you just call them up and say, let's pray. No, it was all, oh, just one mess up after another.

A burner broke down, needed \$500. Try to raise it. Didn't even get \$100 in pledges.

I was going to fix the burner. Just broken, smashed, stepped on. Family members, close friends of my wife and I loved us.

We're at our wedding and then so where God put us. Took one look at the building and the block and went, bye, bye. Send us a Christmas card, but until then, bye.

How do you think we felt? Broken, rejected, but it was all God. It's all God in all of us. God permits these things to break us.

How many want resurrection life coming out of your life? Well, how else is it going to come except through the same way Jesus had to die before he was resurrected? How do you have resurrection unless you die? You remember his teaching, take up your cross and follow me? What do you do on a cross? Die. Not the kind you wear around your neck. Take up your cross, follow me.

Let me work in you. Let me break you. So guys here's some teen challenge.

God is saving you, calling you out from whatever you were involved in and he wants to make you like our brother that came up or like this pastor or pastor a church one day. Who knows what God could do through you, but it won't be by you guys trying. It'll be by just trusting God and saying, God, use every circumstance in life, the uncomfortable ones, all the ones that make you cry and hurt, and yet it's beyond

your control.

You didn't ask for it, it just happened that way. How many have had some like breaking situations and you're like, lift them up high, right? You didn't ask for it, you weren't looking for it, you know? They come. I just, when I walk by the building, let me do one reminiscence, okay? So there was this little family in church that was started to visit.

Nobody visited our church. I didn't want to visit the church and I was the pastor. And they were there and they had a heart to pray, so one midday we just prayed upstairs, six of us, we prayed.

And we prayed and I broke down and cried and said, God, do a new work in me. I was failing at what I was doing, I was not preaching good, nothing was happening in the church, no one was, nothing, just nada, zip, zero. And I cried to God, I did as God knows, is listening to me, I cried to him, God, whatever it takes, break me, break me.

And let me understand your power in a new way and your blessing in a new way. But whatever it takes, whatever it takes, be careful when you pray. They leave, as God is my holy witness, they leave, they're just out the front door and the phone rings in my little office that was so tiny I could only counsel one person at a time.

If you had a marriage problem, both of you, you had to go to another church, I could only see one at a time. It was sad, it was so sad. So phone rings, nobody calls our church, calls the phone.

Hello, Southern African-American boys. Hello, is this Pastor Cimbala? I said, yes, this is me. Oh, you're not fooling me.

I know you, you little racist. I went, ma'am, who is this? None of your business who this is. How about that? But I know what you are, you little cracker.

You're just acting like you love everyone and you're down there, but I know what you are. And I said, but ma'am. No, you shut up, I'm talking to you, I made the call, not you.

And I go, but, but, no, quiet your butts down and just listen to me. And the lady went on and laced me out as God is listening to me. Devastated me.

And I gave up even trying to interrupt her. And this is how she ended. So just know this, you can parade around there with your little handful of people in downtown Brooklyn, but I know what you really are.

You're little, you're what you call me, like a fake, yeah, whatever, counterfeit minister and all of that. You're a counterfeit. And I went, no, I'm not, I'm trying to.

No, I said you're a counterfeit. You shut up and listen to me. I made this call.

So I'm going to hang up now, but God bless you. And then she hung up. That's the truth.

That's the truth. Last thing she said to me was, God bless you. All right.

And this is the truth. This is the truth. Holy God is listening to me.

I put that phone down and I dropped my head. But before I even put my head on that desk, the tears were just flowing out. They were hot too, on my cheek.

And I said, what was that? What was that hurricane that just hit me? And we've all had it. And I'm not trying to hold myself as some example. Black people have had a lot more prejudice put toward them than me.

But you know what? I cried and cried. And all I had just waited on the Lord. And I just felt that God whispering me, would you just pray? He said, whatever it takes.

She's what it takes. Can you believe that God could use things like that? Read 2 Corinthians. Find out what kind of life the Apostle Paul had.

Everybody fussing and fighting with him. So that was good because as I prayed, a peace came into me. I was raised above her and above all of that.

It's like resurrection life coming in. Jim Simbler was dying and he needs to still die. We all need to die.

Guys from Teen Challenge, lift your hand if you're from Teen Challenge. Get up and come here in the front. We're going to pray that death will work in you so resurrection life will work in you.

That God's going to change you. Come right across this front here. Everyone hold steady.

I'm going to dismiss in a moment. Come on right across here. First one here to the end.

There you go. How are you doing guys? Good, good. Love you.

We're so happy you're here. We are really happy. Congregation, are we happy they're here? Lord, I pray for all of us that you'll bring us to the place every day where we have nobody but Jesus.

No dependence on the flesh. No figuring out how we can con our way out of a situation. Just broken and helpless for in our weakness your strength is made perfect.

It's when the shell disintegrates that Holy Ghost life is released. Lay your hand upon these men and women. Do great things in their lives.

Let Jesus be formed in them and explode in them and take them places that they've never dreamed. I mean the impossible is possible with you. If we'll just submit ourselves to you.

Do your work in us Lord. You know what happened that day and how I cried and how I tried to defend and justify and explain and she wouldn't let me and that was perfect because then when she hung up I had nobody but you. Nobody but you.

Help us to die to what people think of us and to approval from others and seeking after our own dreams yielding ourselves to your will. While we pray for these men before you leave everybody stand. Every brother find a brother.

Join hands like we did before and just pray over one another that God's resurrection life will be seen in your life. Sister every sister find a sister while we pray down here. Father thank you for your word tonight.

Thank you for the Teen Challenge guys. Thank you for all the people that braved the weather. Fought off all the distractions of election day so they could be in your house.

Thank you for Bradley the singers the sound people. Thank you for the chairs we sat on. Thank you that the building is comfortable.

Thank you for the carpet on the floor. Thank you for the lights hanging from the ceiling Lord. Thank you for the sound system.

Thank you for the drummer. Thank you for the bass player Lord. Thank you for the all the musicians.

Thank you for your people. We love you Lord and we've learned something tonight Lord. While I was speaking it you were helping me and I believe it got into a lot of our hearts Lord.

Now water that word. Water that word and help us to realize like with John the Baptist who said I must decrease but he must increase. Help us to decrease so that Jesus will increase.

This we pray in his name and everyone said let's give God a hand clap of praise. Praise, praise, praise, praise, praise. I want the deacons and the pastors to give these guys a hug.

I'm gonna come down there from Teen Challenge. Everyone give someone a hug. Wish a Merry Christmas early.

Come on we're in November.

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