

Neither Dead nor Gone

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the resurrection of Jesus Christ and not being stuck in the past, looking for a dead Jesus instead of a living one.

Duration: 37:16

Scripture: Matthew 16:21, Matthew 17:22, Luke 24:27, Luke 24:30-32, Acts 1:4-5, Acts 1:8

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the 17th chapter of Matthew. He emphasizes the good news that Jesus will be raised from the dead on the third day, conquering sin, death, and hell. The disciples, however, were saddened by this news. The sermon also mentions the scene at the tomb where the guards fell like dead men and an angel appeared to the women, reassuring them not to be afraid.

Transcript

I certainly appreciate the privilege of sharing with you this morning in your hour of worship. Might seem a strange question to ask, but would you shoot somebody between the eyes if you thought that three days later they'd be alive again? I mean, would you stab somebody in the back and leave them dying in the street if you thought that three days later they'd be knocking on the door saying, excuse me, but three days ago you stabbed me in the back? Well, probably, at least I trust you've probably had no such ambition. But I think almost certainly you wouldn't kill anybody if you thought that three days later they would be alive again.

So I suppose that it's reasonable for us to assume that Judas Iscariot did not believe in the resurrection, who betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ and at the hands of those who crucified him. But of course it would be quite unfair to blame only Judas Iscariot for his unbelief. Because, if the truth be told, there wasn't one of the apostles, not one of the disciples of the Lord Jesus, who believed in the resurrection.

Not at that stage. Not one. They neither wanted the cross, nor did they believe in the resurrection.

The only difference between Judas Iscariot and the others is that the others got converted and Judas Iscariot didn't. And of course he did the only sensible thing for any preacher who doesn't get converted, he resigned the ministry. I wouldn't recommend resigning the ministry the way he resigned the ministry, he committed suicide.

Matthew 16 and verse 20, Then charged the Lord Jesus his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. This was just after, in response to his question, Peter had stood up and said, Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. And immediately the Lord Jesus places an absolute, stern, strict, and total prohibition upon his disciples and said, You are under no circumstances to tell anybody that I, Jesus, am the Christ.

Isn't that extraordinary? Why ever should the Lord Jesus choose apostles and then forbid them to tell anybody what they have marvelously discovered? That he was the promised Messiah. The one for whom all Israel, all down the centuries had been waiting. Thou art the Christ, son of the living God.

Well the answer of course is very obvious. If at that stage they had gone out publishing the tremendous news that they had discovered the Messiah, with the best will in the world and with the utmost sincerity, they would have talked nothing but unadulterated nonsense. And quite frankly, the Lord Jesus isn't interested in preachers, or men and women, no matter how sincerely, who only talk sentimental nonsense about him.

You remember how the Lord Jesus went on in the following verse, Matthew 16, 21. From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day. This passage was read to us from the parallel record in the Gospel of Mark.

And having given them this panoramic preview of his messianic mission, the purpose for which, as the Christ, he had come into the world immediately, Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee. Said Peter to the Lord Jesus, that won't happen, it mustn't happen, and we're going to make absolutely certain it doesn't happen. He didn't want the cross, and he didn't believe in the resurrection.

The Lord Jesus turned and said to Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou art an offense unto me. Thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

No challenge to his sincerity, no challenge to his sentimental attachment to the Lord Jesus, his willingness for sacrifice. He had forsaken his family, he had dropped his fisherman's nets, he had given himself in totality to the service of Christ. But he was still in abysmal ignorance as to what it was all about.

The Lord Jesus, as the Son of Man, speaking with the mind of God, and Peter, destined to become a child of God, still speaking with the mind of a man. You see, sincerity, enthusiasm, dedication, sacraments, churchmanship, none of this is a substitute for truth, and an intelligent understanding of what God was at when he sent his Son into this world. In the following chapter, the 17th chapter, if it weren't so pathetic, it would be funny.

Again, 17th of Matthew, the Lord Jesus reiterates what he told them in the 16th chapter. While they abode in Galilee, verse 22 of Matthew 17, Jesus said to them, the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him. But he said, I've got good news for you, tremendous news, the third day he shall be raised again.

He will have conquered sin and death and hell, and through death he will have destroyed him that had the power of death, even the devil, triumphantly risen from the dead. Good news, the third day he shall be raised again. Next sentence, and they were exceeding sorry.

Now isn't that quaint? What were they sorry about? That the Lord Jesus was going to raise again from the dead? Now you see, the apostles at this stage and the disciples of the Lord Jesus, they hadn't a clue what it was all about. Like lots of people who go to church today. Like any numbers of folk who gather in the evangelical context of Bible, believing men and women, haven't a clue really what the gospel is all about.

They've learned evangelical language, they can mouth evangelical jargon, and get it all in the right place. But it's amazing how few really understand what God had in mind when he sent his dear son into the world. Well of course the women were in the same unhappy lot, in the 28th chapter of the same gospel, Matthew's gospel chapter 28, in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, in the early light of the breaking of a new day.

Here were this little group of somber faced women, trudging wearily along the road. If you'd been there early morning, in the half light as a neighbor, you might have recognized them as those who were the sincere and devoted followers of Jesus Christ who'd been crucified. You would have recognized them as the women that washed his feet with their tears and wiped them with their hair.

Devoted, devoted to Christ. And if you'd seen them trudging along in the half light, heading towards the graveyard, carrying, as the other gospels tell us, in their hands the ointments and spices with which it was customary in that time to embalm the dead bodies of the departed, you couldn't have been blamed if you'd nudged your neighbor and said, he's dead. That would have been the only sensible, intelligent conclusion to draw, wouldn't it? Here were the women going with spices and ointments to embalm the dead body of somebody whom they love.

Well, you couldn't have been blamed for assuming that Jesus Christ was dead. It was the only picture they gave of him. And when was this? The first morning? The third day? After the Lord Jesus was risen? Risen from the dead? In the end of the Sabbath? I'm sure all of you are fully instructed in the fact that the Lord Jesus wasn't crucified on a Friday.

That's a superstition. That's one of those things that's been rigidified by tradition all down the centuries. But Jesus Christ wasn't crucified on Friday.

There was no Good Friday. That's a superstition. The Lord Jesus was crucified on Thursday.

That's quite obvious. The Lord Jesus said, As Jonah was, not maybe or approximately, but as Jonah was three days, three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days, three nights in the grave. Well, if he was crucified Friday, Friday night, Saturday night, he rose again on that first morning of the week, Sunday.

That's why we meet on the Lord's Day. That's why it's called the Lord's Day. First day of the week, the risen Lord.

Friday night, Saturday night, two nights in the grave. And the Lord Jesus nor the Bible make that kind of mistake. How did this superstition, how did this tradition get rigidified? We love to rigidify our processes until they lose any real sense or meaning.

Well, it's very simple. John explains it, of course, in his gospel. Do you remember? John 19 verse 31, The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation that the body should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day.

And then he puts in brackets by way of explanation. That Sabbath day, as opposed to an ordinary Sabbath day, Saturday, that Sabbath day was an high day. It was the preparation.

It was the Passover Sabbath. There were two Sabbaths that week. Friday, the preparation, an ordinary Saturday.

Two Sabbaths in a row. That's why crucified Thursday, they couldn't touch his body until Sunday morning. Three nights, three days later.

And although John makes it explicitly clear for us, we ignore it and still celebrate Good Friday. Because it's much easier to conform to tradition than it is to discover the truth. But here they were, on that first morning.

Strange things, mind you, had been happening just before they arrived. There had been an earthquake, for one thing. And that had rolled the stone away from the tomb.

And the guards that had been placed there by the enemies of Christ, who were the only people that were afraid that he might rise from the dead. The disciples, they didn't expect him to rise from the dead. The apostles, Peter, James, John, Thomas, they didn't expect him to rise again from the dead.

But his enemies thought he might. So they made absolutely certain that nobody could come and steal his body and pretend that he was alive. And they put a guard.

But when the earthquake came, and the rock was rolled away from the stone, from the front of the grave, the round stone, as many of you may have seen who visited the Holy Land. These guards felt like dead men, we're told. And an angel in bright shining raiment was sitting on the rock.

That was calculated to give the women a bit of a shock, wouldn't you say so? If you were out in the early half-light of the morning and you saw a lot of bodies lying around, and somebody in white sitting on a rock, wouldn't that give you a start? Well, it was calculated to give them a start. But the angel was very kind. It says, For fear of him, the keepers did shake and became as dead men.

Matthew 28, verse 4. And the angel answered and said to the women, Don't panic. Fear not. Don't be afraid.

I know that you seek Jesus. Well, that was kind of the angel. He wanted to allay their fears and their anxieties.

He says, Don't be frightened. I know why you've come. I know that you seek Jesus.

But you haven't found him. And you won't find him. For two good reasons.

You're making two big mistakes. The first mistake you're making is this. You're looking for Jesus Christ in the wrong tents.

And because you're looking for him in the wrong tents, you're looking for him in the wrong place. That's quite obvious. Millions of people are still doing it today.

The angel answered and said, Fear not. I know that you seek Jesus which was crucified. What tent is that? The Jesus that was.

That's the past tense. And if you look for the Lord Jesus in the past tense, you'll never find him. No matter with what sentimental attachment you may come.

You're looking for the Jesus that was. Well, the angel said, Of course he was crucified. You're absolutely right.

He warned you of this again and again and again while he was with you. Throughout the three years, he said he would be delivered into the hands of wicked men, would be crucified, but would rise again from the dead. You're absolutely right.

He was crucified. There's no question of doubt. But that his precious blood was shed as of the incarnate Son of God to pay the price of your redemption.

And there's no other means whereby you may have boldness of access into the holiest of all, save by his precious shed blood, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Said the angel. You're absolutely right.

He was crucified. He was born. He lived.

He died according to the scriptures. But you won't find him here. Because you don't find the Jesus that is in the place where he was.

So because you're looking for him in the wrong tense, was crucified, you're looking for him in the wrong place. He is not here, verse 6. He is risen, as he said. But you didn't listen.

You didn't care to listen. You had your preconceived, your own preconceived notions as to what he ought to do and what he ought to be. So you just didn't listen.

How often we can come to church, sit in a building like this, and have all our rigidified preconceived notions and never listen to what God says. Never. Never.

If we listen at all, we simply interpret what's being said according to our own rigidified idea. We never allow the Holy Spirit to direct us. Everything's all patternized, tied up, buttoned.

No opportunity for God to be God. We make quite sure of that because it might be inconvenient. You see, he might do something that didn't sort of fit into the pattern.

That would be very inconvenient, wouldn't it? So it's dangerous to let God be God. So we play God in our own lives and play God in other people's lives and tell him exactly what to do. He's not here.

Come, said the angel. See the place where the Lord lay. I'll show you where he was and where he isn't.

And then I'll tell you where he is. Go quickly, said the angel. Tell his disciples that he's risen from the dead.

Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee. Why? Well, because that's exactly where he said he'd meet them. That was the place appointed.

There you will see him. No, I've told you. But, of course, they missed their appointment.

Looking for the Jesus that was. In the wrong tent and the wrong place. I know why you came here this morning.

No challenge to your sincerity. Your genuine love for Jesus Christ. But it's tragically possible for you to come here with the loftiest motivations and miss him.

If you're still looking for a dead Jesus hanging on a cross or in a tomb. I mean, sentimentally. We give, of course, academic consent to the fact that he rose again from the dead.

We could prove it chapter and verse. But all too often we behave just as though he was dead. If the world outside were to read our hymns and listen to our songs, they'd shake their heads and say, isn't it sad he's dead? But he's not.

He's alive. They departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy. And they ran to bring the disciples word.

And when they left the place where he was, do you know what happened? They bumped into the living Lord Jesus. You'll always discover where he is if you leave the place where he was. He's alive.

Every moment of every day. And the glorious, glorious privilege, the fantastic privilege that he's given to you and to me is to share his resurrection every moment, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. So there's not a single situation that will ever confront us of temptation, problem, responsibility, perplexity, opportunity, absolutely no situation that can ever confront us at any time for which he alive in us will be less than big enough.

That's the Christian life. That's what makes us more than conquerors. That's what lifts us up out from among the dead even while still in the body.

On earth, on the way to heaven. Sharing the resurrection life of a triumphant savior who doesn't give us eternal life as though he were there and we were here. He can't because he is eternal life.

This is the record God has given to us eternal life and this life is in his son. He that has the son has life. He that hath not the son of God hath not life.

Jesus Christ can only give you eternal life by giving you himself. And that's why he died. He died for you to give himself to you.

And this, of course, is what the disciples at this stage hadn't yet discovered. And so they raced, they raced back to that upper room to break the news to the other disciples, and the disciples huddled there like a bunch of frightened men behind locked and bolted doors. Fearful of every footfall.

You can imagine how their hearts began to thump, how every last drop of blood drained from their faces as they heard those excited feet running up the steps. They said, they're coming, they're coming, yes, they're coming. The same cruel hands that have done Jesus to death are going to come and kill us.

They're coming. Hold the door. Can you imagine? And it was just a bunch of women.

Well, you know, after some persuasion, at last they got them to open the door. And in burst the women, all excited. They say, generally speaking, ladies are generally speaking, but my, this was a special occasion.

And they really let fly. They said, he's alive, he's not dead. We went to embalm his dead body.

And the angel gave us a bit of a start when we saw him all in white and glistening and dead bodies all lying around. But he was very kind and he encouraged us. And he took us to the place where Jesus had lain and it was empty.

And then he told us where we'd been. And we bumped into everybody talking at once. And then there was a cold, sticky silence.

A cold, sticky silence. One of those horribly pious silences that you confront every now and again. And they said, women, you're hysterical.

We've all had a very rough time. Our nerves are on edge too. We don't blame you if you've cracked.

But you're suffering from hallucinations. That's a fact. Luke 24, verse 11.

And their words seem to them as idle tales. And they believe them not. Who's that? Oh, Peter, James and John.

Not Thomas, he wasn't there. But he was as bad as we discover later. I say, would you have invited Peter, James and John to preach in your church? Didn't want the cross.

Completely, flatly repudiated the resurrection. They said to these women, you've been imagining things. You better go home, take half a dozen aspirins.

You'll be much better in the morning. That's what they said. The apostles.

They said, Jesus Christ has died in our day and generation. And in his teachings, Christianity is to survive. It's got to survive without Christ.

Did you ever hear that before? Oh yes, somebody came up with that in a Methodist college and a few other theological colleges in the United States. Only just about 12 months ago. And they thought it was novel.

They thought they were really being smart. This was the apostolic creed. At this stage, they said to the women, he is dead, period.

Jesus Christ died in our day and generation. We saw him hang, we saw him bury. And if anything is going to survive, it's going to survive without him.

That's what Peter, James and John, the apostles said to the women. And having been told where he wasn't, Peter did a typically Peter-ish thing. He went to find him where he wasn't.

Isn't that extraordinary? You know, you must never put these men in a glass case as though they were, you know, 100% tops from start. They weren't. They were the thickest bunch that you could possibly... Don't ever get discouraged with your Bible class.

Or your Sunday school, your congregation. Jesus Christ had a bunch far worse than you've got. They were solid.

For three years he tried to tell them what was going to happen. They threw it all back into his face. Wouldn't believe it.

Then arose Peter and ran to the sepulchre, the place where he wasn't. And stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves and departed, wondering in himself that which was to come to pass. He went to find where he wasn't and was surprised that he didn't find him.

Most extraordinary. And then you remember that two of them, who were present and heard the testimony of the women, we're told in the balance of the 24th chapter of Luke, they headed for home. On the road to Emmaus, probably man and wife.

Cleopas and his wife. And they were thoroughly miserable. Thoroughly miserable, in spite of what the women had told them.

Thoroughly miserable. And the Lord Jesus joined them. And they didn't recognize him.

You don't expect to find a living person around when you are utterly convinced he's dead and buried. And he said, what are you so sad about? Why are you looking so miserable? Why so down in the mouth? And you remember the story, in Luke 24, they began to tell the risen Lord Jesus about the dead Savior. They said, are you the only stranger in Jerusalem that doesn't know what happened? He's dead and buried.

He said, fools, slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses. First five books of the Bible.

All the prophets. He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And you know, he made as though he would have gone farther.

But out of their courtesy, they invited him overnight. And he who was their guest, sitting at their table, played the role of host. Took the bread and broke it.

And two pairs of eyes watched one pair of hands. And they saw the print of the nail. And it says, their eyes were opened.

And they knew him. And he suddenly disappeared out of their sight. Didn't even unpack their bags.

They said, did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way? And while he opened to us the scriptures, he's alive. The women were right. And they didn't unpack their bags.

Verse 33, they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven gathered. They rushed up.

They thumped on the door. And they nearly had another heart attack. And when at last they let them in, they corroborated exactly what the women have said.

They said, he is alive. The women were right. They're not suffering from hallucinations, nor are they on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

He actually stayed in our home and sat at our table. He broke the bread. And in the breaking of bread, we recognized who he was.

We could see the wounds of the cross. Well, they must have been convinced by that. Oh, no, they weren't.

Nothing like it. Mark 16. When Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

She went and told them that had been with him as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive and had been seen of her, believed not. After that, he appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked and went into the country.

Mark 16, 13. They went. They told it to the residue.

Neither believed they then. Peter, James, and John turned to the two disciples back from Emmaus, and they said, You're as bad as the women. Amazing, isn't it? You know that it wasn't until the Lord Jesus himself stood in the midst.

Even while these people had the words in their mouth, and they didn't even believe it then. They thought he was a ghost. Thought he was a ghost.

Thought he was a spirit. And the Lord Jesus said, Why do such thoughts arise in your heart? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me.

Touch me. Come on. Touch me and see.

None of them were enthusiastic about touching him. Have you ever touched a ghost? However, finally, the Lord Jesus sat, do you remember, and sat and had breakfast with them? And they could hardly believe the joy. And the balance of the 24th of Luke tells us the marvelous discovery, the rediscovery they made that Jesus was alive.

Well, that's one picture. But you couldn't blame the world for having believed at that time that Jesus was dead. It was the only picture that the disciples gave.

Dead! But here's another picture in conclusion. You find it in the first chapter of the book of Acts. They're intellectually convinced now of the resurrection.

They're absolutely certain that Jesus is alive. For one thing, he has manifest himself to them by many infallible proofs. Not only that, he conducted a short-term Bible school for 40 days.

And taught them many things concerning the King. And among other things, as they were assembled together, with them he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, you heard of me. John truly baptized with water.

You will be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power, but you will receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon. And then you'll be my witnesses.

Witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. And you will be allowed to testify the things that I have forbidden you to testify, because you don't know enough. But in that day, in that marvelous day, when I fulfill the pledge that I gave you as recorded for us in the 14th of John, ascended to my Father, and I come in the person of my other self, the Holy Spirit, to indwell your redeemed humanity and share my resurrection life with you on earth, then you'll go out to the uttermost parts of the earth, way down to South Australia.

Adelaide, 1970. Because in that day you're going to enter into the good of that for which I died for you. I died for you to give myself to you.

I will not leave you comfortless. I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you.

And because I am alive, you will be alive. Spiritually alive. Reborn.

Regenerated. Well, that was exciting. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld he was taken up, a cloud received him out of their sight.

He went back to share again with the Father the glory that had always been his with the Father in the eternal ages of the past before ever the world was. And they gazed and gazed and gazed into heaven. And if you'd been one of the neighbors, if you'd been one of the neighbors that day, just passing by, and you'd seen this little group of people, 120 of them we're told, and you'd recognize them at once, of course, as the one-time followers of the man that was crucified between two thieves, you'd recognize them at once.

And as a little bunch, as you watched them from the side of the road with your friend, gazing into heaven, you couldn't have been blamed if you'd nudged your friend and said, he's gone. He's gone. What was the picture at the tomb? He's dead.

What's the picture now? He's gone. Gazing into heaven. He's gone.

But while they stood steadfastly toward heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in wide apparel, angels. Angels were very busy just around that time. And do you know what the angels said? They said, you men of Galilee, you men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.

You're absolutely right. You're absolutely right. He will come.

And I know exactly why you're looking for Jesus. But you haven't found him now. Nor will you.

For two good reasons. You're making too big a mistake. You're looking for him in the wrong tent.

And that's why you're looking for him still in the wrong place. This same Jesus shall come. What tent is that? Future tent.

He says, you're absolutely right, Jesus Christ is going to come back again. One day, gloriously vindicated in his deity, king of kings, lord of lords, every eye will see him, every knee will bow. In that day, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. He's coming back again. Exactly as he went, he'll come back again.

But, said the angel, you're going to stand there gazing into heaven until he comes. You've got an awful long way. Didn't you listen to what he told you? That this wonderful, once crucified, now risen and exalted Lord, restored to the glory of his Father's right hand, is going to come and share his life with you by the Holy Spirit.

He's neither dead nor gone. He's alive. And the whole purpose for which he died upon the cross and shed his blood is that you as repenting sinners, in trusting the Lord Jesus, for reconciliation, might become the recipients of his indwelling Holy Spirit, so that he on earth might walk the streets of the city of Adelaide, sit

around your family table, go to school and sit at your study, and go to college, and work in the city, and plow in the fields.

This same Jesus Christ, once clothed with that sinless, matchless body that the Father prepared for him, conceived of the Holy Spirit, and fashioned in the burrowed womb of a virgin girl, this same Jesus Christ, once clothed then in that body, has chosen to clothe himself in this new body of which you are members in particular. Members of that body corporate of which he now is the head in heaven, and in which comprises redeemed sinners washed in his blood out of every nation, kindred, tribe, and town. The dynamic of whose being is going to be the presence of a risen, triumphant, and marvelous Lord.

He isn't dead, or gone. He's in you. If you're redeemed, if you can look back to the day of your conversion, when admitting yourself to be the sinner you are, you received him gladly for the Savior he is, that redemptive transaction was sealed at once by the restoration to you of the Holy Spirit that was forfeited in Adam, whose presence within you is the earnest guarantee, hallmark, and stamp of your inheritance, so that you step out into every new day that dawns, and the conscious sense of his indwelling presence, knowing that Jesus Christ shares with you his victory, his life, his joy, his peace, his power, his purity, his righteousness, so that you can say with Paul the Apostle, to me to be alive, if I'm alive at all, is Christ, because he's neither dead nor gone.

I am crucified with Christ to all that I am apart from what he is. Saul of Tarsus, you can write him off as a dead loss for all his pomp and ceremony, for all his religious zeal, for all his blue-eyed status as the noblest theologian of his day and generation. You can write him off as a total loss.

Saul of Tarsus, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I. Don't get me wrong. Anything that you admire or respect in Paul the Apostle has its origin exclusively in Jesus Christ.

Not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life that I now live in this body on earth, I live through the faith in Jesus Christ that lets him be as God, as big as he is, clothed with my humanity, of which I am totally unworthy. But his infinite mercy and grace gives me the right not only to enter into the good of his atoning death, but into the daily good of his resurrection life.

He's neither dead nor gone. He's alive. Oh, I trust that you're not living between the Jesus that was and the Jesus that will be in a spiritual vacuum, just sweating it out on earth, as though he were hiding somewhere behind the clouds in the dim, distant heaven to which you long with nostalgia.

That isn't the Christian life. The Christian life is enjoying Jesus Christ every moment of every day as the creator God who made you to be inhabited by himself so that your hands might become his hands, your lips his lips, your ears his ears, your eyes his to see with, your mind his to think with, your feet his to walk with, and your heart his to love with. To me, to be alive is Christ.

He's neither dead nor gone. Let's have a word of prayer. We're thankful, loving Savior, for such a marvelous salvation.

Reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, saved by his life. Grant that we may enter daily ever more fully into the salvation that is ours by virtue of who he is in residence within us, in all the mighty power of his indwelling life, the Jesus of the present tense, the eternal, timeless, and unchanging I AM. How wealthy that you have made us, marvelously wealthy.

Grant, dear, loving Savior, that everybody throughout this coming week in our presence may become compellingly aware of the fact that you're neither dead nor gone, but gloriously alive and in wonderfully good health and very much in business as we yield ourselves unreservedly to you as king in your kingdom, the kingdom of God that is within us. And we ask it, though we don't deserve it, for your name's sake, for you're as good and as great as your name, Jesus. You save your people from their sins.

Amen.

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