

We Will All Be Changed

INTRO: This morning we begin a new series entitled, “We Will All Be Changed.” It is a quote taken directly from Paul about how each person will be translated or transitioned from this world into the next world. So really this new series is about transitions.

- I. To be honest, many people either do not like transitions, or struggle with transitions
 - A. I struggled with transitions when I first went to college
 - B. You have to understand that when I was in HS, classes came very easily to me
 1. Granted, I did not take many of the “heavy-hitter” classes
 2. In part because I was not interested in those subjects
 - a) I hated math
 - b) Not real big on science
 3. I was more the computer geek
 - a) In fact, I could write the computer code for the programs we needed to write faster than most in the class
 - b) It was the equations that the teacher wanted solved that I needed help with
 - (1) Once she went over the equation with me, I would write the program in no time flat
 4. Other classes like english and history came easily to me
 - C. Now, I graduate from HS in the top 15% of my class and I have barely broke an intellectual sweat, and I head for college
 1. As I go to college, I begin to get tested
 2. The professors assumed that you had learned how to study, and just kept on teaching
 3. The only problem is, because things came naturally to me, and I did not take some of the beastly classes, I had no idea how to study
 4. I started with an F in one of my classes
 - a) Thankfully, the prof took pity on me and helped me pull my grade up
 5. Once I learned how to study, college became easy
 - D. It was that transition that was so tough for me
 - E. There are other transitions that people find difficult as well
 1. Marriage
 - a) In marriage you take two sinners who now choose to live together for a lifetime
 - b) Trust me when I say that transitions have to happen
 - c) I think about that if and when God graces me with a wife
 - (1) I have been single for a long time

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- (2) She may have been single a long time
- (3) That may be God's big joke on me - Ha! Let's throw these two together and see what happens!
2. Having children
 - a) Brian and Sarah have now had another transition in their lives
 - (1) Many times when kids enter the picture the parents freak out over the transition
 - (2) "How in the world can we do this? I don't think we can survive! How are we ever going to make it?"
 - (3) And just about the time they make adjustments to this little bundle of joy, along comes another one, and more transition
- II. The transition that I want to talk with you about for the next few weeks is the transition from this life to the next - or death
 - A. I didn't mention death earlier or you might not have showed up today
 - B. So this week it is about death, or transitioning from this life
 1. Next week we will look more at heaven
 2. And then we will look at what's after this - the eternal estate
- III. So, let's get started on this theology of death
 - A. Turn to Genesis 3 - that is where we will begin today
 1. Quick background leading up to what we are about to read
 - a) God creates the world - amazingly, perfectly, in the kind of perfect order that only God could think up, and that He always intended for
 - (1) There is no death, no crying, no pain
 - (2) There are no broken relationships - all is right in every way
 - b) Then, sin enters the world by some unwise choices by humanity
 - c) God sets to judging those involved
 - (1) He judges the serpent
 - (2) He judges the woman, and now God sets His sights on the man
 - B. Genesis 3:17-19
 1. Now, what appears to be true here is that, while man was given work to do in the garden, it did not seem like work
 - a) No hard labor, no blood sweat or tears
 - b) Until of course, sin entered the world, because sin shattered what was supposed to be
 2. But now, God says that work will be work, and that you will one day return to the ground from which you came
 - a) Death!
 - b) Death entered the world because of sin
 - c) You cannot separate sin and death
 3. Don't believe me, check this out

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- a) Ezekiel 18:4 “For everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child—both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die.”
 - (1) Who dies?
 - (2) The one who sins
 - (3) If you think that is only about spiritual death then explain why we have so many cemeteries
- b) Romans 5:12 “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—“
 - (1) So if you sin, you die. - Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is...”
 - (2) Any sinners in here?
 - (3) Hate to tell you, but you are all going to die - because of sin
- C. So you now have death reigning over the world, over man, over everything
 - 1. God, however will not sit idle and just watch this unfold
 - 2. Turn to Hebrews 2:14-15
 - a) Do you see what just happened there
 - b) We are the children - we have flesh and blood
 - c) Because we are flesh and blood, God, shared in our humanity and became flesh and blood as well
 - d) However, by His death He changed what death is forever
 - e) So now, Jesus wrath-absorbing death is available for all who believe
 - (1) So this now allows the Bible to speak about death differently than before our sin problem was solved
- IV. Let me give you three perspectives on death from Scripture that help us to understand how we are to think about death
 - A. First, God is simply taking back the gift of the breath of life that He gave us in the first place
 - 1. Psalm 104:29 “When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.”
 - 2. Ecclesiastics 12:7 “and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”
 - a) Another word for spirit is breath
 - b) God is simply taking back what He lent to us to start with
 - c) The fact that you are alive (if you are not alive in here please raise your hand), it is a gift from God - He does not owe you that
 - (1) You are here because God gave you life
 - (2) Not because your dad married up to the prettiest girl in school
 - B. Second, the Bible calls it finishing with our toil or work
 - 1. Turn to 2 Timothy 4:6-7

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2. Paul is about to be beheaded, and he gives these words to Timothy
 3. Basically, "I'm done. My race is over, I'm about to leave because my job for the Lord here is done"
 4. Now, honesty time, being obedient to the Lord can be exhausting
 - a) It just can
 - b) Is it always easy to love your wife the way Christ loved the church, men? (I promise I don't ask to get you in hot water) - NO, that is a tall order
 - c) Women, is it always easy to honor and respect your husband? There are days it probably is not
 - d) Is it easy to war against your fleshly desires?
 - e) Let me tell you that there is a day coming that you will be able to rest
 - (1) God has called us to do these things that go against our sinful nature
 - (2) Sometimes we get exhausted doing them - it can be tough to follow God
 - (3) But the day will come when we will be at rest and made perfect the way God desired all along
 - (4) What did Paul say? - "To live is Christ and to die is gain"
 5. We need to begin to understand death the way God does
 - a) He has a job for us to accomplish (so btw, we should probably find out what that job is)
 - b) We will not leave this earth one minute sooner than what we should
 - (1) If you ask me to explain infant or child deaths, all I can say is that in God's plan, somehow it brings glory to Him
 - (2) This is an area where we need to get a handle on just how broken the world is due to sin - it is completely unjust that someone so young would be taken from this world, but that is how deep the fallenness of man and sin go
 - (3) Why, from our perspective did they have a life cut short we may never know - but we can trust the One that does
- C. The last way we see this is a surrendering of our spirit back to God
1. We all know Jesus words, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit."
 2. If you think you are not Jesus, remember Stephen said the same thing
 - a) Acts 7:59 "While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.""
 3. We as believers in Christ, should have a real confidence that when death comes, it is a returning of our spirit back to God

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- V. There is more to this our understanding of what death is through the Bible than just viewing life as a gift from God that we return to Him and our mission being up
 - A. In the middle of this perspective from Scripture, we also are given the “okay” to mourn
 - 1. It’s okay to cry
 - 2. It’s okay to hurt
 - 3. It’s okay to miss someone that leaves this world for the next
 - B. If we miss this point, all we have is a cold theology that refuses to acknowledge the fact that we are human, and we have emotions
 - C. There are many places in the Bible that we could go to look at this, but the one I often use for funerals is John 11 - so please turn there
 - 1. Verses 1-8
 - a) If you have been around church much, you probably know this story - but let’s look closely at a couple of things
 - b) Verse 3 - Jesus loved Lazarus - this is important
 - c) Verse 4 - Jesus tells them that the sickness will not end in death, but God’s glory
 - (1) Now at this point the disciples may very well have been thinking that Jesus was going to heal Lazarus
 - (2) We give them a hard time, but this seems like what Jesus just said, and these guys have seen Jesus do this already
 - d) Verse 5 - Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus
 - (1) This was not just some family that Jesus ran across once in his life
 - (2) He knew this family well, and loved them deeply!
 - e) Verses 6-8 - We are headed to Judea, to which the disciples protest because people tried to kill Him there
 - 2. Drop down to verses 11-16
 - a) Verse 11 - Jesus tells them that Lazarus fell asleep (a euphemism for death)
 - b) Verse 12 - The disciples say, “Well he will get better then”
 - c) Verse 14 - These guys miss the point - kind of clueless actually, so Jesus has to tell them, “Lazarus is dead”
 - (1) What’s more, I’m glad he is dead
 - (2) I have been healing people around here and still you do not believe - now you will see what God can really do, and who I am, and maybe then you will trust
 - (3) If you ever need encouragement because you feel like you have a hard time trusting God - this text is for you
 - (a) Jesus loved his disciples

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- (b) Yet they could be so clueless
- d) Verse 16 - “let’s go and die with him”
 - (1) Thomas reminds me of Eeyore
 - (2) Every word out of Thomas mouth is negative
 - (3) I picture Jesus shaking His head, thinking, “Oh guys...you are so clueless.”
- 3. So Jesus and the disciples head for Bethany and meet Martha
 - a) They exchange some of the most familiar and favorite passages in the Bible
 - b) But in the course of conversation about her brother’s death
 - (1) Jesus tells her that He will raise him
 - (2) She says, “Yes, I know he will raise with all the others”
 - (3) This is where we get “I am the resurrection and the life”
 - (4) What is so significant is the fact that she calls Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God
- 4. So then they go get Mary, and the scene is almost repeated
 - a) “Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died”
 - (1) Understand that they are confessing their faith in Jesus over sickness
 - (2) They did not understand Jesus power over death itself
 - b) With her were the people that were in mourning
 - (1) Could have been professional mourners - which people hired back then - or it could just have been friends and family
 - (2) If you have never experienced this in your life, you will at some point
 - (a) The shock hits you and the family when someone dies
 - (b) You call family and friends together
 - (c) The shock and tears subside
 - (d) Then someone new shows up, and all the tears start again, because you remember new things, you share more stories, new ways the person was special and will be missed
 - (e) This happens over and over
 - (f) This happened when I showed up when my dad passed away
 - c) This is what happens with Mary
 - (1) She sees Jesus and collapses at His feet
 - (2) Everyone erupts into mourning
 - (3) And Jesus, enters into the mourning
 - (a) He does not rebuke them
 - (b) He does not tell them they are wrong for crying because it was just Lazarus returning to the Father

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- (4) He enters into the sorrow, knowing full well that in just a few minutes He will raise Lazarus from the dead
 - (a) He asks for where Lazarus is
 - (b) And then the shortest verse in all of Scripture - Jesus wept
 - (c) They all said, "See how He loved him"
- 5. At moments like this, Jesus is not criticizing them for not trusting His sovereign will
 - a) Do we believe in His will - of course!
 - b) But it hurts, and God knows this, and God enters into our pain
 - (1) Remember Hebrews 4 - We do not have a high priest unable to sympathize with our weakness
 - (2) He completely feels the pain too
 - c) This separation was never meant to happen, but because of sin it does
 - (1) One person leaves and goes to the Father
 - (2) Others are left to grieve the loss in their life, and God feels the pain, too
- VI. One last passage and we will call it a day - John 8:48-58
 - A. Understand that this conversation gets progressively more antagonistic
 - 1. This is a conversation if you were witnessing, you would be trying to find a place to hide
 - 2. Because with each successive statement tensions continue to rise
 - B. It starts out with the Jews claiming Jesus was a demon-possessed Samaritan
 - 1. If you have been in church long you know how Jews felt about Samaritans - hated is a weak word
 - C. Jesus answers back that He is not demon possessed and basically, you guys better watch your mouths because the One that seeks my glory is the judge, and He will judge you
 - 1. Verse 51 "I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death"
 - D. They answer, "We know you have a demon now, because everyone dies, including our greatest ancestor, Abraham. Are you greater than Abraham?"
 - E. Jesus speaks of Abraham as if He knew him in verse 56
 - F. They reply that Jesus can't know Abraham because He is not even 50
 - G. "Before Abraham was, I AM"
 - 1. Jesus is not just saying that I existed before Abraham - He could say that by saying "I was"
 - 2. Jesus is not just claiming eternity, He is claiming to be God
 - 3. And the crowd knew it - which is why they try to stone Him
 - 4. Jesus point is simple - you will not see death because I AM - I am God! I accomplish what I promise I will do

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- H. Let me circle around and pick up the parts about death that we need to see and we will finish up
1. Jesus says, “if you obey my word you will not see death”
 2. Did you notice they changed what Jesus said from see to taste
 - a) I point that out to say that, first, Jesus was okay with that, see, taste, alright
 - b) But also to point out how quickly words can be taken out of context and changed
 3. So what does that mean that we will not see or taste death?
 - a) Some think it means that before death comes, an angel or Jesus or someone comes to receive you into heaven
 - (1) Which could be true
 - (2) It’s speculation, but often times, when believers pass away you will see a smile, and breath, and they are gone
 - b) Some think that it means that the way death has always been understood no longer holds on to a believer
 - (1) Rather than dying to face judgment
 - (2) We translate to heaven to be at Jesus’ side
 - c) The fact is that we don’t know exactly how things happen, or what precisely this means, but we understand that somehow, for those that obey His word, they will never see death
 4. Which begs the final question, what word?
 - a) If Jesus means a list of commands, something is wrong
 - (1) We can’t be good enough to keep a list of commands
 - b) John 1 answers this
 - (1) Jesus is called the Word at the beginning of the chapter
 - (2) Drop to verse 12
 - (3) It is those that believe in the name of Jesus
 - (a) Those that trust Christ to accomplish redemption
 - (b) And the reverse would be true - those that do not obey the word will see/taste death
 5. This final passage is pretty sweet
 - a) Jesus promises that we do not experience death like others
 - b) There is something there, something different in how things go
 - (1) We translate from this life to the next
 - (2) We have run our race, accomplished the mission God has for us and we return to God the gift of life He lent us to accomplish His will