

Welcome to Your Death

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[0:00] Last week we reached a decisive point in our Sunday School series. We stopped focusing on the little kingdom and we started focusing on the big kingdom.

! God's glorious big kingdom that we take part of salvation.! And at the center of God's big kingdom is one person, and it's Jesus Christ.

The Son of God. He's co-equal in glory and honor with the Father. He is God. The Son of God. And Jesus Christ is the center of the big kingdom because He is the center of everything.

He really is the center of everything. And as a way of review, let me ask you, how or maybe why? Why is Jesus the center of everything?

In what ways? He's the source of everything. From Him, everything created comes. What else did we say? He came and paid the debt to bring debt that we owed.

[1:12] Down to everything the Father gave Him to do. Right. At the center of salvation is Jesus Christ. All redemptive blessings, everything flows through Jesus Christ.

Without Him, there is no salvation. And that is what He meant when He said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man can come to the Father except through Me. He was being absolutely exclusive.

He was being absolutely exclusive. And God is being absolutely exclusive in the way that He saves us. Jesus Christ is the center of our salvation. And if we don't have the center, we don't have any of it.

What else did we say? He's the motive. What did we mean by that? The motive behind our life is Jesus Christ. If everything exists for Him, that includes us.

And so we should live our lives aimed for His glory. What else did we say? Everything visible and invisible. Right. Everything visible and invisible.

[2:17] The creation around us. Trees and rocks and humans and animals. And then we go to angels and all the world. That kind of world.

It's for Him. He made it. God made it for His Son. And we experience it for His Son. And we thank God and we enjoy it.

And all of it, all of our experience of it, and the reason that God made it, is centered on Jesus Christ. What else do we say? Dan? He's my hope.

He's the thing that I, the person that I live for, and my confidence is in, in this big kingdom that He rules. And so all my dreams are in Him.

Right. Our dreams are shaped by Jesus Christ. And so, He's what I'm banking on. To live my life, Jesus Christ is who I'm depending on.

[3:18] He's the direction I'm going. He's the one controlling my thoughts and my dreams. Dale? Our goal is where He is to be made known and to be worshipped.

Right. That's sort of related to motive. And that's the end of the motive. He's the direction that we're going. He's not only the reason that we're going there. He is where we're going to see Him glorified.

Right. The, the final thing I said is that He is the center of God's new creation. So, in the first creation, God created it for Him, visible and invisible.

And then in Colossians, you'll remember that He's the firstborn from the dead. He's the beginning. He's the beginning of the new creation. And so, in all things, He has the preeminence.

So, whether we're talking the first creation and salvation, or the creation, the second creation, so to speak, when everything is renewed, He is at the center.

[4:20] He's the center of this world and the next. I would love to spend another week, at least, talking about Jesus and how great and how precious He is.

We need to be thinking about Him more. This week, I spent three hours on my living room couch with talking to Jehovah Witnesses.

And Jehovah Witnesses think that Jesus is a God, not the God. He's a God. He's not God Himself. They think Jesus is a creature. To hear them belittling my Savior and my God, it makes me very sad in one sense and very angry in another sense.

And I found myself picking up Phoebe, who's two, and whispering to her, Jesus is God. Jesus is God. Don't ever forget that. And she smiles at me like I'm a loony.

And, and you know what? Thank God, I'm a loony for Jesus. Jesus is God. Because, because that's His work.

[5:29] That's His work in my life. And that's His work in your life. When God saves us, He knocks us off the throne. And He puts Jesus on the throne. And He has to be the center of our life.

And so, when He, when God saves us, He makes us say with Thomas, my Lord, and my God, and we fall down and worship Him. Jesus is the center of God's big kingdom.

And, He knocks us off the throne. And in a beautiful way, He puts Jesus on the throne of our lives. And that's what we talked about last week. But this week, we need to go a step further.

And we need to ask a question of, well, if Jesus really is the center of God's kingdom. He really, really is. Whether I make it so or not, it's not by my believing that those things happen.

God has installed His kingdom, King on His holy hill. And He didn't ask me. He didn't take my vote. This is what God has done. So the question is, how does Jesus become functionally the center of my life?

[6:37] The center of our lives? Jesus is in reality the center of everything. Well, how do I make that reality functional in my day-to-day life? And this week's lesson is entitled, Welcome to Your Death.

Welcome to Your Death. Today we're going to talk about your death and my death. Because when Jesus calls us to live for the big kingdom, He calls us to die.

He calls us to die. The call to live for transcendent glories. Remember, we talked about those at the very beginning. Of living for God's glory, and living for truth, and living for stewardship, and living for community.

That call to live for those things is, at the same time, a call to die. And it's a paradox. To live, we must die.

And it is a paradox. In calling us to die, Jesus actually rescues us from death and gives us real, new life.

[7:51] And this is how Paul Tripp puts it. We had avoided going into that room as long as we could. We knew it would not be comfortable, natural, or easy.

We were sure none of us would leave the room with any joy. It would have been nice to have been able to talk about life, about tomorrow, about the future, but we went into the room that day to talk about death.

Mom's body simply couldn't sustain her any longer. And she was artificially kept alive by medical technology. And the doctor was there to ask us how long we wanted to keep her in that state.

I remember thinking how universal the hatred of death is, how much grief was in this critical care unit, and how many people walking the halls were wishing that they could take life in their hands and give it back to a dying loved one.

In light of this, it must have been a shock when Christ turned to his followers and announced that they must die. It was not much of a way to excite the crowd or market his kingdom.

[9:08] Christ was calling his listeners to something that is simply counterintuitive for us all. We all work to preserve both our physical lives and our own personal definition of life.

We work hard to avoid danger, injury, suffering, difficulty, trial, and loss. This instinct to preserve and defend life is deep within all of us. Yet here, the creator of life is actually calling us to think positively about dying.

It doesn't seem to make any sense. It doesn't seem to make any sense. So, Christ's call to live is a call to die.

We enter the big kingdom through our death. That's what Paul says in Romans 6. Romans 6.4 says this, We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

So, how did new life come to you? Well, it came through your union with Jesus Christ. As he died, he was buried, and then as he was raised, we are raised.

[10:24] The only way that a selfish, greedy, clutching, grasping, old sinner can have a new life is through death.

The only way old Scrooge can live or the only way that the new Scrooge can live is when the old Scrooge dies. And that's what Jesus Christ accomplished accomplished on the cross. And that happened. We died and we were raised with him. And that's where our salvation is resting in his death, his life, his resurrection.

Well, how does that, how does that reality become functional in our lives? How does that make a difference in our lives? And Paul goes on in verse 11 of Romans 6. In the same way, we count ourselves dead, or in the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. That's how you, how it becomes functional in your lives. You count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let me ask you, what does that mean?

[11:38] What does that, what does he, what does he mean, count, count that so? Dare. Okay. What else can we say?

That's very good. What does it mean to count on something or reckon it? Yes, Mike. To take it as true, rely on it, because there's still the evidence to make me think that it's not the case.

And I should have done it. Take it as true. Yeah. We need to be careful. This isn't, when we say, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus, we're not talking mind over matter. We're not talking, just say this is true and somehow it will become true. Paul is saying, this is true. Now, stake your life on it. Depend on it.

Count it as so. Reckon it up. Mark it in the category as this is true and start living that way. This isn't pretending something that isn't real.

[12:54] It's saying, this is what your life really is. You are really dead to sin. So, live that way. Well, how does, how does that reality of death and union with Christ's death how does all that become functional in our lives?

Well, turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 9. Jesus puts it another way. So, Jesus has called us to die. This is where we find that.

Luke chapter 9, verse 23. Then he said to them all, this is Luke 9, 23. Then he said to them all, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.

for whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.

[14:09] We can't live for Christ unless we first die to ourselves. And here's where we see the great difference between the little kingdom and the big kingdom.

The little kingdom promises you life and then it gives you death and then the big kingdom tells you you must die and then when you do die it hands you life.

The little kingdom promises life and it gives you death and the big kingdom promises life after death. And isn't that what Proverbs 4.22 says about the little kingdom?

There's a way that seems right to a man but in the end it leads to death. It seems like life. It looks like life. It smells like life but in the end it's death.

It brings you death. And that's how the little kingdom always works. It portrays something and it says this is life and then when you hold on to it it turns out to be death.

[15:22] So Satan comes to Adam and Eve in the garden and he promises them life. You're going to be like God. And that sounds good.

And if it was true it would be good. But in the end their choice brought death and it's always that way. And the same dynamic is working not just back then but it's working in our lives all the time. We pursue life in the little kingdom and we're trying to live for ourselves we're guarding our lives and protecting it and we're trying to get more life for me and it kills you.

Your world becomes so small so it suffocates you it crushes you as you pursue yourself more and more. Well can you think of any place where any place in life where we think that there is life only to find death?

That's a question for you. What are some of the ways that we pursue the little kingdom and then end up really just holding on to death? So what are some examples of that?

[16:41] Yeah that's true any any addictive sin that's why it becomes addictive because it's promising life and it looks like life and inevitably it leads to death.

What else? I think of ASAP and Psalm 73 and the life talk about what might be the higher life here in this world but then the psalmist says until I entered the sanctuary of God then I understood their final destiny so I think of that it looks like life but it's not.

Yeah ASAP gets the really big picture doesn't he? Sometimes people get their death so to speak in this life but anyone who pursues something outside of God will get death eventually finally in the afterlife.

Yes Steve? I think like lies even little boy's lies promise so much in the short term you know but it kills the sensitivity of our conscience it kills our integrity it kills you know eventually it kills our testimony it doesn't all the way around very good you can think maybe of gluttony so food is good we need we need food to live food is life in a lot of ways and God created food to be accepted and received with thanksgiving and so we can hold on to it we can make it a part of our life and we can make it our life and we pursue it more and more and so it's fun to eat and so we eat and it satisfies me when I'm when I'm depressed and so I eat then and when I'm feeling out of control to eat makes me makes me feel like I'm in control and the whole time we're pursuing life in the food and it ends up killing us it destroys us food replaces God and whenever something becomes an idol in our life it starts to work death idols always promise life and when we lay a hold of them they start working death in us physical death spiritual death and the idol becomes everything in our world and we start to suffocate under its presence well you can think of wives and husbands and children and houses and cars and friends they can all promise life and they're all good things in their place but in the end if we pursue them like they're the end all of be all and we do we pursue them without God they kill us our own family will start to work death in us if we make our family God the more we pursue the little kingdom the more we try to get all of our ducks in order so our life is just the way that we want it we just bring more and more death into our life and that is why Jesus is so adamant and serious in his call here if anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me for whoever wants to save his life will lose it whoever loses his life for me will save it we need to listen because

Jesus is telling us something that is going to save our lives he's telling us how to escape the little kingdom and how to live for the big kingdom the kingdom of life well we're going to break down what Jesus tells us here into four parts in Luke into four parts the first is the call and you can see that if Jesus says deny yourself if anyone would come after me he must deny himself that means we have to die to the priority of self to self see I love me and we've said this I love me and I have a wonderful plan for my life and we're always pursuing what I want what I would like and we strive to be first and we strive to be in the lead we want to be best we want to be the center the most powerful the best known the most loved and so we indulge our desires we want that for ourselves and so we build our lives around it we prioritize our life around those things we live for number one and that's how we used to live that's little kingdom living where everything all our plans all our dreams all our hopes all our confidence it's all there if I can get me to be better at the center then that's what it means to live and to our face and with love

[21:44] Jesus says you have to say no to yourself you have to deny yourself you have to say no to you because if you don't loosen your grip on your life then you're going to die so Jesus says next take up your cross this is still part of the call take up your cross I have to die to my pursuit!

of life life and the pursuit of life is a very deep thing inside of us we live to protect ourselves to defend ourselves we want to keep ourselves safe and sound we want to guard what we our definition of life is and Jesus tells us no you have to take up your cross you have to quit living to protect yourself quit living for you well how can he say that to us how can he say that how can he say to us get on get your cross and get on it and you gotta follow me you have to kill yourself you have to stop guarding your life so tightly well who is he to say that to us well remember he's the one that took up his cross for me and for you and it wasn't just those hours on the cross that he was carrying his cross he left heaven and all of its perfections to come to this world and this world is okay for us because we're sinful but I don't think we have any idea of how much it must have how horrific that transition must have been from heaven to this earth and so he walked around and he talked with men who hated one another they hated each other and they were hated and then sinful

men tried him they tried him

Herod Pilate the Sanhedrin they tried the judge of all the earth they put him on the witness stand or they put him and they convicted him do you see the obscenity of that that's like that's like the maggots in the garbage can putting me on trial and convicting me while they eat garbage and that's what it was like and they tried him they convicted him they nailed him to a cross and they left him to die and we ask why why well Paul tells us the Lord loved me and he gave himself up for me and so what Jesus is saying is I died for you now it's time for you to die for me I sacrificed my life for you I sacrificed heaven and joy and pleasure for you and so now you must sacrifice your life for me well the third part of Jesus call is follow me take up your cross and follow me we have to die you have to die to your plan your plan everyone has a way they want to go!

has a direction they want to take their life and Jesus is saying you have to die to that plan to your selfish plan that only thinks about you and he's saying follow me you want to go this way but I'm going this way so it's you have to turn around and follow me so what plans do you have for your life what plans do you have for tomorrow and the next day is Jesus plan and Jesus is saying it has to be my plan if you want life it can't be your plan anymore it has to be my plan well that's his call now Jesus next he presents the logic behind his call so that's his call here's the logic Jesus says for and that's a logic word that's a reason word for whoever wants to save his life will lose it save it so here's the reasoning behind it here's the logic the the dna of sin is selfishness and it's all about me it's self focused and so sin sucks us down it makes us smaller and tighter and it makes us go deeper and deeper into the little kingdom and the whole time sin is taking us away from

[26 : 49] God it's taking us away from God who is life and so the further we go into ourselves the further away we go from God and so that's why Jesus says if you hold on to your life if you keep living for yourself you're going to die because you're going to go further and further away from God well you've all heard of that the monkey that or the monkeys that they can trap by putting a banana or a piece of fruit in the trap and all the monkey has to do to escape the trap is let go right but the monkey won't let go and he won't let go of the banana even after the person is right there and capturing him and that's us we hold on to our lives we grab on to what we think is so good and we won't let go even when we're starving when there's food over here we won't let go of the food that's in the trap and so we jealously hold on to our dreams and we hold on to our priorities and our agenda and we really want to live and it kills us it enslaves us and so there we are we're living these tiny meaningless lives because we won't die to ourselves we won't say no to ourselves so we run after achievement and acceptance and appearance and possessions we want all those things because we think if we have those then we'll have meaning and they'll be my identity that's how people will know who

I am by what I have and what I look like and what I've done and those things are my joy and those things are my purpose that's why I live and you all know what those things do may may may but they can't get out.

And they know the whole time that this is killing them, and they still can't stop. And selfishness is more addictive than crack.

Because you know what? If you work hard enough, you can stop that. But no one can cut us off from ourselves and from selfishness.

It takes a work of God to part us from our pursuit of life. So here's Jesus' plan. If you're going to live, that person has to die.

[30 : 04] He has to die. That desire, self, he has to die. If you're going to live, self has to die. And so if we're going to stop, if he's going to stop us from committing spiritual suicide, if he's going to stop us from going further and further into ourselves and killing ourselves, then the only way is to take up the cross and die.

And it's paradoxical. If we're going to avoid suicide, self has to die. And so Jesus knows our destructive addiction to self and how it inevitably leads to spiritual suicide.

And so he tells us, take up your cross. And if you do, then you'll live. You'll have God. If you'll just put that to death, then you can have life.

Well, Jesus next asked a question. A question. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit his very self? And this is a question we need to ask ourselves. How much is enough?

[31:30] When is self going to be satisfied? How much do you need? How much selfish life do you need to live before you lose everything?

You lose your very self. And what can make up for losing yourself, your soul? If I gave you a million dollars and then I gave you a billion dollars and then I gave you all the money in the United States and then I put the whole world at your feet and you have it all.

You gain the whole world. But then you lose your soul. You lose yourself. And what have you gained? Because the minute we have it all, God takes it away.

And we've lost everything. So the little kingdom, little kingdom living, investing in the bank of self is the worst investment that we can make.

And you know that. You know that. You've read this before and I've read it before. But it's so hard to make that reality functional in our lives because going out to eat at a fancy restaurant and living a certain kind of life, it seems like life.

[32:51] It seems like this is the way I should live instead of, we'll say, giving money to God's work in His kingdom. And buying more clothes, that seems to be where life is instead of going without.

And sleeping in can seem more like life than getting up and having communion with God. See, it's so easy to invest our lives in the little kingdom because it's so tempting.

It's so attractive. It seems to make so much sense. And the whole time we're investing and investing in that little kingdom. And Jesus is saying, why?

That's the worst investment you can make in the whole world. Because when you have it all, when self has everything, then you lose it all.

Well, Jesus next gives us a warning. If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory, in the glory of the Father and of the angels.

[34:04] So here's the warning. He's told us the reasoning. Because if you don't, you're going to commit spiritual suicide and you're going to lose everything. If you don't say no to yourself and say yes to God, you're going to die.

And then Jesus, he wants us to get it. And so he adds this warning. If you're ashamed of me, I'm going to be ashamed of you. If you don't die to yourself.

If you're ashamed of Christ. And I think in this context, to be ashamed doesn't necessarily mean to be embarrassed of him so much.

It's simply, you don't find him worthy of your life. You look him over. You look Christ over and you look the world over and yourself over.

And to be ashamed of Christ means you look him over and then you cast him aside as unworthy. So, it means to deny Christ his rightful place in your life.

[35:08] It means you reject his plans for your life and you stick with your plans. And you find your purpose somewhere else. You don't find it in him.

He's not your motive. He's not your goal. He's not your hope. He's not your source. Something else is. And so, you're going to treasure that thing, whatever it could be, you're going to treasure that over Jesus.

And that's what it means to be ashamed of him. You don't want to be seen with him, so to speak.

And so, if he isn't the center of your life, Jesus gives us a warning. If he isn't your ultimate treasure, if he isn't your king, your planner, your reason, your motive, your hope, then the warning's clear.

If you don't treasure me, then I won't treasure you. And if you deny me my place at the center of your life, then I'm going to deny you a place in my kingdom.

And if you take the throne, then I'm going to take you off the throne and put you into the pit. And if you take the center and you push me aside, then I'm going to take you and I'm going to put you into outer darkness.

[36:17] So if you effectively ignore me on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday, if you effectively ignore me on those days, then Jesus is saying, I will effectively ignore you on the last day, on the greatest day, on the most important day.

See, Jesus is making it clear. Self will die. It's going to die now or it's going to die later.

And if we die to self now, then we get life. And if we live for Him, then He's going to welcome us into His eternal kingdom like we saw this morning.

And if we live for Him, then angels will watch as He opens the door and welcomes us in. So by putting our agenda, our plans, our ideas for our life, and we put it on the cross, we actually make room so that we can live a big kingdom life.

[37:41] This is how we entered into the big kingdom through salvation, through death, as we were united with Christ. And this is how the big kingdom starts to live in our lives.

And so, when I lay my life on the altar, and I say, here God, this is my life. Do what you want. Consume it for your praise.

You'll live like God wants you to live. And Jesus will say, on that last day, well done, good and faithful servant. Come into my kingdom.

Well, we're dismissed. Please may may may may may may may may may may may may may