

Call to Worship:

Grace and peace to you from Him who is and was and is to come, and from the seven spirits before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood, who has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and power forever and ever! Amen.

Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him.

Prayer of welcome into the Holy of Holies:

Our dear Father, we are here in your presence because you have opened the door into your palace before your throne and invited us, your beloved children, to come confidently and boldly. We glorify you by doing exactly that. We see your joy at winning our hearts to love you and to seek your Fatherly reward for being faithful children. We come to sit at your feet, to hear your wisdom, to be refreshed in the unity of your family, the body of your Son, the church.

In His Name, Amen

Hymn: *by C. Wesley*

1. What shall I do, my God to love, my loving God to praise!
The length, and breadth, and height to prove and depth of sovereign grace?
2. Thy sovereign grace to all extends, Immense and unconfined;
From age to age it never ends, it reaches all mankind.
3. Throughout the world its breadth is known, wide as infinity,
So wide it never passed by one; or it had passed by me.
4. My trespass was grown up to Heaven; but far above the skies,
In Christ abundantly forgiven, I see Thy mercies rise!
5. The depth of all-redeeming love, what angel-tongue can tell?
O may I to the utmost prove the gift unspeakable!
6. Come quickly, then, my Lord, and take possession of Thine own;
My longing heart vouchsafe to make Thine everlasting throne.

Prayer with the wider church:

Father, you have established ministries of Holy Spirit power and wisdom to ensure the victory of your Son's church. Measures of these gifts are ours to use confidently and eagerly. Help us to fulfil the role and work you have given to each one of us. Help us to feel the fact that though we cannot see it with physical eyes that we are working for your glory in the great Kingdom of Heaven.

And Father, on this day, we uplift the church in the trenches of brutal warfare. We are privileged to belong to such an army of righteousness. Lead us to be worthy of this privilege. In Jesus' Name.

Scripture:

- Mark 10,29-31

Other Scriptures will be used for reflection and prayer after the teaching – see below.

Teaching: The Age To Come

Jesus spoke about the “age to come” as something His listeners should know and be clearly aware of; *“Truly I tell you, no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times more in this age—and in **the age to come**, eternal life.”ⁱ*

There is no doubt, there is another age, another stage or eon of life that necessitates us leaving this stage in our bodies, on earth. Jesus is stating a clear truth about this coming age; it is abundantly more than the very best of even family life we have known here, and is characterised by life. Every reward in this life is added to in the next. This Life is so wonderful, it is called eternal. And it is a gift from God to his sons' followers, those who want the company and friendship of the Lord Jesus.

For Jesus, the life we now live, which will conclude at our death, continues with a different life in the ‘age to come’.

Jesus, the one who is The Life, who is the author and source of life, he has made this promise. He wants us to have this Hope, this expectation. Otherwise, why would He have taught it! This is His reward, the fruit of His obedient work of redemptive shedding of blood on the Cross; it is the harvest of the burden of His soul for us.

Some say that this sort of talk obscures our attention to daily needs and earthly responsibilities. Other, wiser ones say that clear-headed thinking about our life-direction and destiny actually helps us to be wiser and clearer thinking in the present life and the decisions required of us.

You who are reading or hearing this are invited to let Jesus teach you about what is ahead. So let yourselves be expectant, even excited. We don’t want to rush into it, but we should be free of all fears and worries concerning leaving this body and receiving a new, different heavenly bodyⁱⁱ.

Jesus said He was going ahead to set up a heavenly home for us. He Himself spoke easily and expectantly about coming from His Father and going back to His Father. *“I am going to the Father”* was a favourite statement of our Lord, and he spoke it with joy and confidence. We should well use this truth more intentionally. Let us ask our Lord to share His confidence with us so that it is part of our nature to look forward and confidently say, ‘I too am going to the Father’! Of course, in his time and according to his purposes for us.

But let us consider that great day when we slip away to heaven. The Apostles never spoke of it as ‘death’. For him, Apostle Paul spoke of that day as ‘departure’ or ‘being freed’; *I desire to depart and be with Christ, [which is] far better indeed*. Peter referred to his passing as his ‘way out’ of this world. The word he used was the word ‘exodus’, not death or even a passing.

We, too, like believers even before the incarnation of our Lord Jesus, can have a genuine *'longing for a better country'*.ⁱⁱⁱ

We have the right given by our Father in heaven to be rid of all anxiety about our departure day. In fact, God is glorified as we align our thinking with Him when he says, *"He is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them"*

Stingless death is the transition stage. Scripture calls it sleep. But it is not the sleep of the soul or spirit, only of the body. One day we will receive new bodies for a new heaven and earth.

So there is an inspiring and exciting future ahead. We should let the words of Jesus nourish this in us. *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints*, precious, in the sense of being carefully watched over. The Lord carefully tends us in those moments, gently leading us into the next wonderful life stage He has for us and longs to share with us.

Some wonder what the next stage might be like, before the final resurrection stage. Well, we have data. Paul had a foretaste of the next stage, and while he doesn't say much (he is unable to), he does give sufficient to help us^{iv}. And mind you, it is more precise and confidence-inspiring than the Near Death Experiences being written about recently.

John Wesley thought about this and wrote:

"Even in paradise, in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, we shall learn more concerning these in an hour than we could in an age, during our stay in the body. We cannot tell, indeed, how we shall then exist, or what kind of organs we shall have: the soul will not be encumbered with flesh and blood, but probably it will have some sort of ethereal vehicle, even before God clothes us "with our nobler house of empyrean [third heaven] light."

So what can increase in us this strong confidence and hope which pleases our Lord Who watches from heaven, as well as benefiting our present health and probably also increasing our true joyful Christian testimony before the watching eyes and minds of our children and grandchildren?

First, accept your situation. Some of you reading this may be getting on in years and experiencing the frailties and pain of increasing physical decline.

Remember and meditate on this: Jesus *"took up our **infirmities** and bore our diseases."* At our 'exodus', we are totally helpless. It is at this time, when we have no ability to change things that we can decide on one thing. That is, to simply rest in Jesus, who has already borne our infirmities, including the unknown part, our death. He has drawn the sting of death away in His own obedient suffering and death. All is well with our souls. Rest and enjoy.

Second, we can quietly and easily read and reread sacred Scripture in which, as Paul says; *"everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of Scriptures we might have hope"*^v

Next, don't give in to the characteristics of the present age: triviality, diversions, and lies. The so-called "trust the ABC" let alone commercial stations are not set up to encourage and firm up your faith like Scripture can and does. Don't be fooled. The present age is

'disbelieving, adulterous and wicked' don't expect good to flow from it. Go for fresh, clean water, not putrid stuff masquerading as 'sweet and nice'. Deceiving, presumptive lies are all around us. Take one example: Evolution as a theory of beginnings. Evolution theory is now debunked even by secularists—they are compelled to, the evidence is out. It is rational, logical and evidence-based to understand that there is a Creator. And we know who that is!

Another thing, don't be scared of what the next generation thinks of you. Holding to the data of your faith, that Jesus is the Son of God, raised from the dead, is rock-solid truth. Don't Bible bash but be ready for a simple statement of testimony when opportunity comes.

For those who are older and feeling it in their bodies, be like Barzillai^{vi} in the account of David. Read of him who had the aches and pains but had a contented reality about himself, without making it the centre of conversation. It is not helpful to let the bulk of our conversation be about the tablets we are taking and doctors' appointments. Share more of what has been a focus of prayer and insight from Scripture. Use your superior senior experience, and before memory gives out to leave a clear memorable word.

So let us live as usefully as we can, even though the days seem to flash by.

The following are some more statements from the Bible by those who had confidence in Jesus, the Lord of Life. Read slowly and think over each one:

And I heard a voice from heaven telling me to write, "Blessed are the dead— those who die in the Lord from this moment on." "Yes," says the Spirit, " they will rest from their labours, for their deeds will follow them."

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. / From now on there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. / But if I go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. So what shall I choose? I do not know. / I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better indeed.

If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies. / And everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

And Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

But as for you, go on your way until the end. You will rest, and then you will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast and immovable. Always excel in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.^{vii}

Prayer:

Make each one of these statements of confidence yours. Put your name in the place of "I". For example, you might pray: Heavenly Father, because I live, I live

unto your Son whom you have made my Lord, and when I die, I will die unto my Lord Jesus. So it makes no difference whether my body is alive or dead, I am with my Saviour who lives forever.

I claim with conviction that neither death nor life, neither the present nor the future, nor anything in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, I wish to say again that I will let nothing move me, and I will give myself fully to the work of the Lord both here and in heaven

In Jesus Name, Amen

Hymn: *by Robert Murray M'Cheyne*

1. When this passing world is done, when has sunk yon glaring sun,
When we stand with Christ in glory, looking o'er life's finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know – not till then – how much I owe.
2. When I hear the wicked call on the rocks and hills to fall,
When I see them start and shrink on the fiery deluge brink,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know – not till then – how much I owe.
3. When I stand before the Throne, dressed in beauty not my own,
When I see Thee as Thou art, love Thee with unsinning heart,
Then Lord, shall I fully know - not till then – how much I owe.
4. When the praise of Heav'n I hear, loud as thunders to the ear,
Loud as many waters' noise, sweet as a harp's melodious voice,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know – not till then – how much I owe.
5. Chosen not for good in me, wakened up from wrath to flee,
Hidden in the Savior's side, by the Spirit sanctified,
Teach me, Lord, on earth to show, by my love, how much I owe.

Benediction:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your entire spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.

i Luke 18.29,30. Mark 10.29-31. In Mark Jesus says you will receive a hundred times more than you sacrificed even in this age and all that and more in the next age.

ii 2 Corinthians 4.16-5.10 ponder these windows into our heavenly home.

iii Hebrews 11.16

iv 2 Corinthians 12.1-4

v Romans 15.4 take the Apostle's advice, He means it. The Holy Spirit feeds you with eternal life as you confide in Scripture promises.

vi 2 Samuel 19.31-39.

vii These references are; Rev 14.13, 2Tim 4.7-8, Philip 1.21-23, Rom 14.8, John 11.25-26, Luke 23.43, Dan 12.13, 1Cor 15.58.

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