



DEATH

Stuff We Don't Talk About
(But Probably Should) – Part 4
Senior Pastor Keith Stewart
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We don't like to use the word "death" even when someone we love has died. Instead, we describe them as having passed. We strip them of their identity and refer to them as the "departed" or the "deceased." Talking about death often leads to awkward silences or a plea to change the subject. There really is a healthy way to talk about life's ultimate reality. It's time to strip away the fear of death and look at what God has to say about it.

"The statistics on death have not changed. One out of one person dies." - George Bernard Shaw

1. DEATH DENIALISM

"The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is the mainspring of human activity—activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny for [humans]."
- Dr. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*

Only a small fraction of Americans has wills.

42 drivers have lost their lives at the Indianapolis 500

"You don't go look at where it happened. You don't watch the films of it on television. You don't deal with it. You pretend it never happened."

- Scott Goodyear, Former Indy Driver

Apoptosis

Each day the average adult loses 50-70 billion cells.

anti-aging

"Aging and death are the spotlights that illuminate the fraudulence of the culture's promises to deliver us a good life. Culture has no answer for the ticking hands of time. All it can do is distract us from the fact that we age, we feel pain, and we are going to die."

- Mark Sayers

...the last enemy to be destroyed. 1 Corinthians 15:26

2. DEATH REMEMBRANCE

Intentional reminders of death

Memento mori

pirate flag



Pause my friend as you pass by
As you are now so once was I
As I am now so must you be
Prepare for death and follow me

❑ The benefits that come from facing your mortality

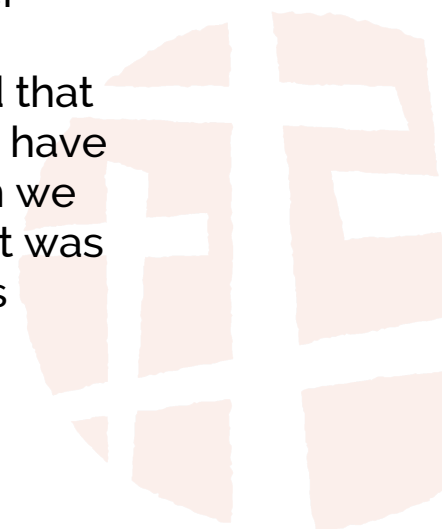
"We are all going to die. The only difference between you and me is that I have a better idea of how and when. But all of us should be ready. I am, are you?" – Jonathan Thigpen

"My patients say that being handed a death sentence forced them to learn how to live. I learned that no matter how much time we think we have, what we do with it is all that matters."
- Dr. Bernie Siegel, Love, Medicine, and Miracles

"You cannot pass a day devoutly unless you think of it as your last." - John Climacus, a seventh-century ascetic who wrote Ladder of Divine Ascent

"...death adds greatly to the meaning and value of life. What illness does for the appreciation of health, death does for life." - Karl Popper, Philosopher

"It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth - and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up - then we will begin to live each day to the fullest, as if it was the only one we had." - Elisabeth Kubler-Ross



“Everyone knows they’re going to die, but nobody believes it. If we did, we would do things differently.”
– Morrie Schwartz

“So we kid ourselves about death.” – Mitch Albom

“Yes. But there’s a better approach. To know you’re going to die, and to be prepared for it at any time. That’s better. That way you can actually be more involved in your life while you’re living.” – Morrie Schwartz

❑ Preparing God’s people for a good death

“...a way of life that uses weekday tasks, encounters, and situations as the raw material for teaching prayer, developing faith, and preparing for a good death.” – Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*

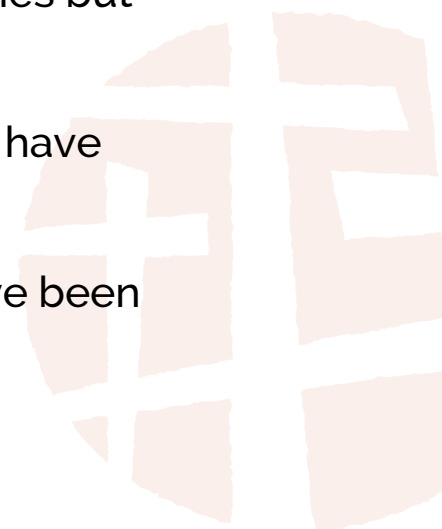
“Our people die well.” - John Wesley

All of us die but we don’t all die alike.

“Death is more universal than life; everyone dies but not everyone lives.” - Andrew Sachs

When it comes time to die, make sure all you have left to do is die.

You’re prepared for a good death when you’ve been living a full life.



“Rabbi, I’ve hardly slept at all since then. I can’t stop thinking that it could happen to me, that one day it will happen to me, and a few days later I will be forgotten as if I had never lived. Shouldn’t a man’s life be more than that?” – Rabbi Harold Kushner, *When All You’ve Ever Wanted Isn’t Enough*

Yet you do not know [the least thing] about what may happen tomorrow. What is the nature of your life? You are [really] but a wisp of vapor (a puff of smoke, a mist) that is visible for a little while and then disappears [into thin air]. James 4.14 (Amplified)

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13.13

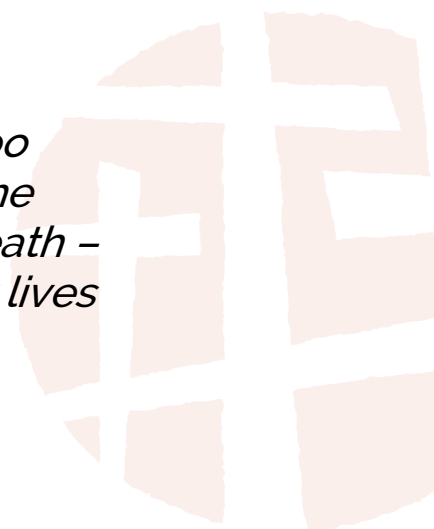
3. DEATH DEFEATED

❑ No more sting in death

Christ Jesus... who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 2 Timothy 1.10

Whoever lives and believes in me will never die. John 11.26

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. Hebrews 2.14-15



He set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. Hebrews 2.15 (NLT)

Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Revelation 1.17-18 (NKJV)

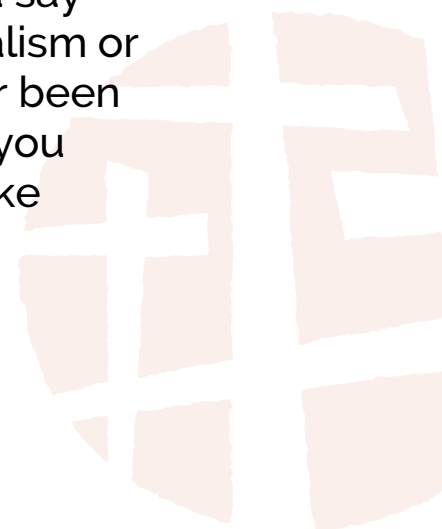
“Death cannot kill a believer, it can only usher him into a freer form of life.” – Charles Spurgeon

No more fear in death

“Act like this person did, and this is how you will end up.” - Paula Fredricksen

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Pastor Keith took some time to explain some of the many ways we deny death. What are some of the ways that stood out to you? Can you think of other ways we deny death as a culture? Would you say you personally lean more toward death denialism or death remembrance and why? Have you ever been to a funeral? Whose funeral was it? What do you remember about it? What did you like or dislike about it?



2. Have you ever considered the concept of memento mori (the practice of remembering death intentionally)? What do you think of it? Have you or would you ever consider doing it? Why or why not? Pastor Keith named a few things that remind us of death, the skull and crossbones, his coin, cut and dried flowers, hourglasses and used up candles. Can you think of other things that might serve as a reminder of death?

3. The purpose behind remembering death is not to become obsessed with death itself – far from it! Instead, it's to teach us to number our days (Psalm 90.12) and live our lives intentionally, purposefully, and meaningfully. Discuss the following quote...
“It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth - and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up - then we will begin to live each day to the fullest, as if it was the only one we had.” - Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

4. Pastor Keith made the case that the purpose of life cannot be to be remembered or that our name will live on. Just the simple reality that very few human beings who've ever lived will be remembered beyond two or three generations. He suggested that life's true purpose that applies to us all is simply to live out our love for God and our neighbors because love is the one virtue that we carry with us into eternity. What do you think of this idea? If you disagree, then how would you answer the question, what is the purpose and meaning behind life? And how do we square that with the reality that we are all so soon forgotten?

5. There is no question that death is a different experience for a believer in many ways. How has Christ's work on the cross changed the experience of death? How does your faith and walk with God impact how you experience the loss of others in death? If someone claims to be a follower of Christ and is struggling with the fear of death, how would you advise them, pray for them, and support them?

