

There is a document here at church that gets mixed reviews. Some people request it. Some people don’t know about it. Some give you an interesting reaction when you bring it up or offer it to them. What is it? It’s the “Planning My Christian Funeral” form. They are located at the information desk if you are interested. (I don’t see a rush.)

We don’t often like to talk about death, let alone our death. We should have an aversion to death. Death is common, but it’s not natural. It’s not what God intended for us. God put Adam and Eve in a garden where they could eat from the tree of life and live forever. Because of their sin, death came into this world, and they were kicked out of the garden so they would not eat from that tree. They died. We are descendants of Adam and Eve, conceived in sin and therefore subject to death as well, at least physical death. Death does not always wait until you’ve filled out your form. Today, Jesus gives us reason not to fear death. Jesus gives us reason to trust him.

In Life and Death Look to the Lord!

“When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake.” You may not like crowds, but you get used to them when you follow Jesus. He did a lot of miracles in Capernaum. He taught with authority. It doesn’t mean everybody believed in him, but you couldn’t ignore him. At the very least, he was some kind of prophet and miracle worker. He preached by the lake – that’s where the people were. He even called some fishermen to be disciples.

“One of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” So he went with him.” How terrible! We don’t know how long his daughter was sick or with what, but we do know it was serious. She was at the end. Jairus was a synagogue leader – think Church Council or Church Administrator. While there were mixed reviews about Jesus in Capernaum, Jairus must have heard Jesus teach with authority in the synagogue, and known about or seen with his own eyes Jesus cast out an impure spirit from a man in the synagogue. If anyone could help his little girl, Jesus could. He trusted Jesus could help. Jesus wanted to help, and he went.

“While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?” Death beat them to the punch. What can you do? Dead is dead. Hospitals have ambulances and helicopters for a reason, but once a person is dead, they aren’t much use. There are other things to do and arrange. Mourning takes the place of emergency. *“Why bother the teacher anymore?”* makes sense to us. But Jesus isn’t deterred. Death doesn’t win against Jesus, even when it looks like it.

“Overhearing what they said, “Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” Jesus asks the impossible of this man. How could Jairus not fear? How could Jairus not fall apart? His little girl was dead. You can’t just undo death. But Jesus tells him, *“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”* Believe in what/who? **In life and death look to Jesus!** - who he is what he does.

“He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly.” Jesus had work to do. The Father’s plan led to Jerusalem and to a cross and empty tomb. Sometimes as Jesus was teaching he would allow the crowds to witness a miracle. Not only did the miracles help others, they were signs confirming his deity and the truth of his teaching. But often Jesus would take someone aside to heal them, meet lepers in lonely places and then have them run and show themselves to the priests, sometimes Jesus even slipped away, and the person did not really know for sure who healed them. Jesus was not there to start a revolt like many would-be-messiahs had done before and would do after him. Jesus was there to save souls, not a piece of land. But he did bring along two or three witnesses as the law said.

We have an order of service for Christian Funeral (CW p.144). It is very Christ-centered and comforting. It helps you **In life and death look to Jesus!** At St. Paul’s, the day of the funerals is often flexible. It’s usually 11am on whatever day is chosen. Embalming and cremations give you time to let people know and

allow family and friends to gather to mourn, express condolences and encouragements, and to receive comfort from God's Word. In Jesus' day, it's my understanding that funerals were on the day of death or the next morning. Mourners were already at Jairus's house when they arrived. Maybe the synagogue sabbath schoolteachers were organizing a group of her sixth-grade classmates to sing for the funeral.

"When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. he went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him." Do you laugh at God's promises and commands in times of trial or temptation? It is only by the grace and mercy of God worked in us by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament that we know better now. But sometimes we still laugh in disbelief or doubt. We laugh at God's commands when we break them. A lack of faith that God will answer our prayers shows itself when faced with difficult situations where we can't see a way out or anything good to come out of it. We worry, we fear, we can't sleep. We may pray and give it to God, but moments later we take it back again to worry about it some more.

We steal, covet, and connive – thinking God will not give us what we need in the timetable we want it in, and we can't be content unless we get it. We laugh when we don't trust Jesus to make things right, so we take revenge and lash out at others, belittle them, and speak cutting words to them or behind their back. We laugh when we look at this life as all there is or act that way misprioritizing to try to make heaven on earth and downplaying that our true citizenship is in heaven. Death often exposes this because we can't help it, change it, or stop it, and our faith falters. Our doubting laughter in trials and temptation does not stop Jesus from being faithful to his love and promises to us. **Look to the Lord!**

"After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha kum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat." Jesus is more than just a miracle worker or a prophet. He is true God as well as true Man. He came not to put on a show, but to save. When he gives help, it is complete.

They saw it with their own eyes. He even took this little girl by the hand. The Word of God, Jesus' Word, has the power to make the dead live. This dead little girl hears. She stands up. There wasn't a wheelchair at the ready. She didn't need one. She was completely and fully healed *immediately*. She did not need rehab or ice chips, but was walking around before them. She would be hungry. She was a 12-year-old! How impossible, but how real and true!

They laughed at him, as they beat him. The soldiers even mocked his pain and made it worse with a crown of thorns and hit him on the head. The chief priests and the crowds laughed at Jesus with taunts and jeers. And on that lonely cross suspended between heaven and earth, his work of redemption complete, the cup of punishment for sinners drained completely, his blood shed to make us at one with God, Jesus gave up his life. And the disciples' faith faltered. The women mourned. Fear reigned. But death doesn't win against Jesus, even when it looks like it. When Jesus comes to help, he does it completely. Three days later Jesus physically rose from the grave. He showed his nail-marked hands and feet and pierced side to the disciples. He walked around and ate. He was a 33-year-old! He lives!

This means your sins have been paid for. You are forgiven through Christ Jesus and his sacrifice alone. This means no matter what issue, problem, sin, difficulty, hardship, cross you have, or even death itself, it cannot overcome you. You have one you can bring it to, and he will take care of it. Jesus' word will strengthen you, forgive you, help you bear up under it, cast out your fear and give you faith to trust Him. **In life look to the Lord!** Not even death is final for you. The sting has been taken away. We call death a sleep for the believer. Because it is. Jesus will raise you up on the last day. *"When from the dust of death we'll rise to claim our mansions in the skies. E'en then this shall be all our plea: Jesus has lived and died for me."* (Christian Worship Hymn 376). **In death look to the Lord!**

Jesus doesn't give us strict orders to keep quiet anymore. His work accomplished, he tells us to share the good news with the world, that you and I and others may know and believe - **In Life and Death Look to the Lord!** Amen.