

# Eternal life in Christ — Thelma Mendel's memorial service

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Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[ 0 : 00 ] Verse 24, would you please stand if you're able with me for the reading of God's Word? John chapter 5, verse 24, these are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

It is possible to think you're right and to yet be completely wrong.

One of the moments where I laughed the most with Andrea and with Grandpa and Grandma Mendel was when we were on a bus ride from São Paulo in South America, Brazil.

[ 1 : 08 ] We were going to the Iguazu waterfalls. And it was an overnight bus ride, maybe 16 hours on the bus. And it was worth it. And Grandpa really wanted to see the world's largest waterfall in terms of water volume.

So there we are on this bus. They're in the two seats right in front of us. Andrea and I are right behind them. And it starts to get dark and all the lights go out and people are falling asleep. But Grandpa has his light on and he's got his maps out. And he finally found the right map and it's all in Portuguese, of course. He had brought it at the local book stand. And he couldn't hear too well.

So he was talking very loud and getting himself worked up on the map of where we are. He's trying to read the road signs, the ones that had a light. And Grandma Thoma started kind of arguing with him and telling him that it didn't look right.

Put it away. Everybody's trying to sleep. And they just kept getting louder and louder and louder. And Andrea and I just started laughing because he would not give it up. And he had been tracing on his map a little black line with a permanent marker where he thought we were going.

[ 2 : 12 ] And finally we just went up there and we're looking at it with them. We're trying to make sense on the map as well. And Grandpa had traced it completely wrong. He had us almost in another state where he thought the bus had been going compared to where we really were.

And of course Thoma was just laughing so hard when we pointed out his mistake. And I'll always remember that, just that sense of humor, love for adventure and doing it together, each with their personalities just shining.

You know, but it's a wonderful picture as well. In this world, even if your hearing is perfect and your eyes are great and you speak multiple languages, it's possible in this life to think you're right and to be completely wrong.

A memorial life or a funeral, it's a time where all of us inevitably are thinking about what is life and what is it all for? And even what is death?

The Bible says there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it is the way to death. Proverbs 14, 12. It is possible to think that you have life, that your soul is living and to yet be spiritually dead.

[ 3 : 25 ] That's possible. Our verse today, our Lord Jesus says, truly, truly. And he's repeating that word truly, truly two times because that's the way in ancient Hebrew and Greek culture to highlight, it's to emphasize.

You can't put it in bold and italic and under underline in all caps. So truly, truly, our Lord wants to get your attention. Truly, I say to you. And what I want you to see here is a wonderful promise, but it's conditional.

The promise of our Lord of eternal life depends on three things. Number one, who is it that speaks? And I want you to see today, who is it that speaks these words of promise to you? Number two, it's only to those who believe and receive his promise. And finally, it's if you trust him. So it's possible to think you have life in your soul, spiritual life, and yet remain spiritually dead. Let's look at our first point. Can you see the one who speaks to you? John 5, 24. Truly, truly, I say to you.

[ 4 : 36 ] Our Lord Jesus is correcting and he's speaking with the authority of heaven itself, the revelation of God himself to these religious leaders and teachers of the law who are arguing and bickering.

The Sadducees said there was no life after death. There are many today, probably most in our country that believe that. It's fatalism. You live your life for pleasures in this world only. And even if you think there might be some type of heaven, it's not a biblical view of what happens to the soul at the moment that the body takes the last breath. And we need to hear the word from heaven itself through our Lord Jesus.

Truly, truly, truly, I say to you. And this was correcting the accusation of the Pharisees. They wanted to know by what authority is this man come into our town and proclaim this kingdom of heaven in such a powerful way.

By what authority? In the context of John 5, Jesus has just told a lame man who could not get healed by getting into the water. He could not do it by himself. And Jesus, with the same words, he says, I tell you, pick up your mat and walk.

[ 5 : 46 ] And that man received that word from our Lord. The spirit brought a miracle in his life. He applied the healing word of God and he stood up and walked. You know why Jesus did that?

Because that was a picture lesson. That was a visual illustration that everyone there could see. No one could deny that the word of our Lord Jesus carries power to bring life and to heal.

And that word of our Lord Jesus, he still speaks today through his word. Who is it that speaks? The book of Revelation calls him the true and faithful witness of heaven.

Our confession says he is very God of very God. Took on flesh to save sinners. He is our Lord, our creator, our law giver.

Jesus spoke word of life because that's the mission his father sent him to do. John 3:16. You know this one. But have you thought about what this promise says in light of the transforming work inside of you?

[ 6 : 50 ] For God so loved the world. Yes, the world. The sinful, wicked, rebellious world.

Not just the Jews. He loved every nation, tribe and tongue. Whoever would believe in him. That he sent his only begotten son. That whosoever would trust him would have forgiveness for sins.

This world that God loves. We know how broken it is. But let's not be quick to look out there. Sin. According to John Piper, one one pastor.

This convicts me. A friend of mine had this on his refrigerator. For God so loved the sinful world. He loves sinners like me. Who have not honored God's glory.

Sin is the holiness of God. Not revered. Sin is the greatness of God. Not admired. It's the power of God. Not praised.

[ 7 : 53 ] Sin is truth of God. Not sought after. It's the wisdom of God. Not esteemed. Sin is the beauty of God. Not treasured. It's the goodness of God.

Not savored. Sin is the faithfulness of God. Not trusted. Sin is the command of God. Not obeyed. The justice of God. Not respected.

It's the wrath of God. Not feared. It's the grace of God. Not cherished. It's the presence of God. Not prized in your life. It's the person of God.

Jesus Christ. Not loved. That's what sin is. And into such a world. The father sent his only begotten son. And Jesus speaks.

He says, truly, truly, I say to you. If you look on your program. You'll see two dates. One is when Grandma Thelma Mendel was born.

[ 8 : 52 ] And the other date was May 28th, 2022. And doesn't your first thought go to on that day, the second date, May 28th.

That's the day when eternal life began for Thelma. Isn't that where your thought goes? But I want you to pay careful attention to this verse. Because the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Truly, truly. I say to you. It's that eternal life had already begun. The moment that the soul believed and trusted in Christ. So not only do you need to see the one who speaks in this verse number two. You too. You must believe in Jesus. He says, truly, truly. I say to you. Look at the next words.

Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.

When Jesus says, whoever hears my word. He's really talking about the revelation of the kingdom of God. He's saying not just this word in this moment, but my teaching, my doctrine about salvation.

[10:05] My opening up, unveiling to you the true nature of God the Father. Believe what I'm telling you about God the Father. And you have eternal life.

The word of our Lord Jesus is what you must believe. You must believe the truth about his person, his life, his work, his kingdom. The peace that passes understanding that can come from Jesus alone.

The rule over your life by our Lord Jesus. And that the judgment of God cannot be suspended. God must judge sin because God is holy.

And he must punish evil because God is good. And the judgment of God can only be suspended if there is one who takes the judgment in your place.

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to earth to reveal the Father to you and to live the life you could never live. So that when he paid the sacrifice for sin on the cross, you could receive his righteousness.

[11:12] And receive the forgiveness because the judgment of God had already poured out on his own son. I want you to take your eyes back a couple of verses.

John chapter 5 verse 21. Jesus says, For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

When the Lord Jesus gave up his life, he was holding on to this promise. It's the Father who has power to raise a life from the dead.

Jesus himself had to trust that promise when he took on the flesh. And Jesus says, If you hear my voice today, then the gospel promise is for you.

That means Jesus himself is giving you life. If you are opening your ear, believing and trusting upon him. John Bunyan, who wrote Pilgrim's Progress, he wrote another book.

[12:19] And he describes the soul as a city. And you picture a city that's going to be surrounded by the enemy, besieged on all sides. He said, The soul of man is under constant attack.

Don't you feel that? Not only from the world and the poison that comes in through the media and our phones and stuff like that. But also from within. Our own flesh is at war over the soul.

And he said, The soul has these gates. One is the, It's the senses. Your hands, your feet, your eyes. They can be gates for sin to come in and attack your soul.

But he said, There's one source of hope for the dead soul that's surrounded and besieged. And he calls it allegorically, he calls it ear gate. If you'll hear the word, the word of your king, your commander, through the ear gate, your soul can find life and refuge and protection.

So that's what Jesus says today. Our verse for today, verse 24. Whoever hears my word, this is the word of salvation coming through ear gate to your soul, that you can have eternal life.

[13:32] And my exhortation to you today is receive the word of Jesus. Receive it like his cousin, John the Baptist, received it. He said, when he beheld Jesus and heard him preaching, he said, Now my joy is complete.

He said, The friend of the bridegroom stands and hears him and rejoices at his voice. Does your soul rejoice at the voice of your Savior, Jesus Christ?

I was thinking, as DJ shared, that Thelma's request was not a eulogy describing how great her life was. She wanted to see the glory go to God.

And if that was her desire in the flesh, how much more so would that be desire when you finally behold the Lord Jesus in his full glory and splendor? How could you want anything less than that? Can you pray today like the hymn says, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight. Don't you long for that day when your soul is united to Christ and what you believe with a weak faith like a beggar's hand.

[14:44] One day you'll behold fully. But that promise is not yours. Only if you behold Jesus or even hear the words with your body, you must trust him.

This is my final point. Trust Jesus. And look again at the verse. You need to see this with your own eyes. Whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life.

Look at the next few words. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Did you catch the verb tense?

He has eternal life. That's when eternal life begins, when you trust in Jesus with your life. And you don't fear judgment and condemnation for your sin because you already have passed from judgment, from death to life.

That's what Jesus promises. I started off by telling you it's possible to think you have life and yet remain spiritually dead.

[ 15 : 51 ] The Bible says there's a way that seems right to man, but in the end, it's the way to death. That's a biblical way of understanding what your life is.

Psalms 8 says that God created man and set him a little lower than the angels. So we are given a flesh, a body. The Puritans described the body like a garment.

When the child is a baby, it's young, it's brand new. You know, the skin is tight, full of life. And as that body, that flesh wears down, it becomes like an old garment. And some of you might be feeling like your knee or your back, it's like a filthy rag.

By now it barely holds together. The psalm 8 also says that you have been crowned with glory and honor as being the image bearer of God. And that means that the body is the temporary vessel. It's like the war-torn ship that's taking your soul to eternity, to heaven with the Lord, if you are united to him. One pastor, John Flavo, said, the soul is the life of the body and Christ is the only life of the soul.

[ 17 : 05 ] If Christ is not the Lord over your soul, you have no spiritual life. Just like what death is, it's when the soul is separated from the body.

It's the absence of the soul in the body is physical death. In the same way, the absence of Christ in the soul is spiritual death. Jesus explained, here is what eternal life is, that you know the only God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

John 17. In John 10.10, Jesus said, I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. That's what eternal life is.

It's to be united to our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. So which field, which soil, which fruit are you in? Like we heard this morning, as Travis mentioned, bad tree can only bear bad fruit.

But if you are in Christ, your life will produce the fruit of the spirit because it's the spirit working in your soul to bear his fruit. There's a pastor in London named Martin Lloyd-Jones, and he uses a very simple picture of two fields.

[ 18 : 20 ] And as we are driving here, these beautiful winding roads through Nebraska and to South Dakota, I saw that contrast and it immediately came to mind again. There's the well-kept soybean field.

You know, the ditch is mowed nice and it's been sprayed. It's that dark green. It's got irrigation. It's got everything it needs. And right next to it, with this drought, is that abandoned field.

There's stumps. There's weeds. It's dry. It looks like you drop a match and it's going to go on fire. So picture your life. You've got your body and your soul.

And no matter where, which field you're in, your soul is going to be bearing one type of fruit or the other. And one is the field of death. Picture barbed wire, poison, machine guns, all kinds of things that will destroy your soul.

And on the other side, it's the field of peace and life in Christ. Jesus says, his banner over me is love. And that's the banner in a war. If you make it underneath that banner, you are safe.

[ 19 : 27 ] The power of this army is protecting your soul for eternity. And the promise of Jesus, truly, truly, I say to you, if you believe in me and trust in me, you have eternal life.

You have passed from death to life. Do you see Jesus as he's revealed himself? Do you believe in his promise from his word that that's for you today?

That's for your soul. And do you trust him? I'm reminded of that beautiful hymn. To see him, behold him there, the risen lamb.

And believe him, my perfect, spotless righteousness. And trust him. Who are you trusting? The great, unchangeable I am, the king of glory and of grace.

Just last week, my family and I, we got to go visit a different grave site and a different headstone. and it was my grandpa's father.

[ 20 : 36 ] And the story that my dad told us, it was very sad. And it was that my grandpa, he never heard the words I love you from his father until he was an adult.

And so when we visited this tombstone, I'm trying to picture my grandpa who, in his 40s, God saved him and he raised us in a very loving way. But he never heard those words from his own father. I love you. And if you, you look back on the generation before, his dad thought he was doing pretty well because he had, he himself, so my great, great grandpa, he had been dropped off at an orphanage when he was only three years old.

His dad was the town drunk. So he provided for his family and he gave them a place to live and work. He never told them I love you, but he thought he was doing pretty well. And we can't help it but think back on these generations of our life and impose upon God that he's distant and cold and that he doesn't speak.

But I want you now by faith to hear the words of Jesus one more time. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.

[ 22 : 01 ] Jesus came to say I love you from God the Father. Make sure you will believe this, that God is not silent and even now his word goes forth and his Holy Spirit applies it through our mind to our heart so that your soul can be united on him and you must believe in Jesus while your body has breath.

You must. And when you trust in Jesus, you will have passed from death to life. And you'll be able to enjoy eternal life now in preparation for heaven, eternity with him.

And you'll be able to sing one with himself. I cannot die. My soul is purchased by his blood. My life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ my Savior and my God.