

THE LIFE

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Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[0 : 00] John 14, three statements of Jesus, I am the way, the truth, and the life. As we finish with life, let's pray. Gracious God, we thank you that you are the source of all life, and you also came to redeem us to give us life as you have life forever.

We pray that as we gather this morning, and especially as you speak your word of life to us, that we might come alive in Christ. And we ask for your miraculous work to be done by your spirit through your word now in Jesus' name.

Amen. Juan Ponce de Leon was a Spanish explorer and a governor of Puerto Rico in the early 16th century.

Quite significant things back in those days. But what he is known for broadly outside of Puerto Rico is for his search for the fountain of youth.

A spring that restores youth to anyone who drinks from it or anyone who bathes in it. Unfortunately, he never discovered the fountain of youth, but he discovered Florida instead.

[1 : 13] And perhaps somewhat ironically, the mecca for retirement for US citizens. Today, however, some scientists are keeping his dream alive.

These thinkers believe that genetic engineering or the discovery of anti-aging drugs could extend human life far beyond its current natural course.

And so in 2015, it was reported that Google was throwing its might and its billions of dollars into a project to slow the aging process.

I assume mainly for Mark Zuckerberg, but as a young guy, he just sees much more of a world to conquer. Now, researchers think it's possible for humans to live until they're a thousand years old. Now, this project, while it has its positive sides, has many philosophers and ethicists deeply concerned.

[2 : 25] They're seeing that there are enormous amount of negatives to living so long. There's the prospect of boredom as your daily routine drags on and on and on and on and on and on.

The prospect, in fact, of having too many memories to remember them all and the really important ones from your early days actually being forgotten by the time you get to 800, 900 years old.

There's also the problem. They figure that if your life hasn't got purpose at 70, it's not going to have purpose at 700. And there's also the unappealing prospect of a thousand-year reign for the likes of King Jong-un of North Korea.

But what if you could? What if you could have life? I mean, real, enduring life.

Life without pain, without fear, without bondage, without failure, without the constant feeling of disappointment. That would be different.

[3 : 38] You know, a thousand years of life as it currently is, that's not so appealing. And for Mission Month, we've been wrestling with three of these outrageous claims of Jesus.

John 14, 6. Jesus claims to be the way, the truth, the life. And today we're looking at the final one, the life. He's claimed to be the life. And in John 10, 10, just before he says this, he says that Jesus says, I have come that you might have life and have it to the fullest.

And so there's four things that I want to say about this claim to Jesus' life. Normally three, today four. It's not going to go longer, however, so just put that at rest. Firstly, why Jesus claims to be the life.

Secondly, his life challenges our minds. Thirdly, his life gives us hope. And finally, his life gives us purpose. So firstly, why Jesus claims to be the life.

The Bible declares that God is eternal. Even if the Bible doesn't declare it, if there is a creator, he, by nature, has to be eternal.

[4 : 55] Philosophers agree with that. God's life has no beginning. It has no end. And the God of the Bible claims to be that God who has no beginning, no end.

In fact, a psalm that was written by Moses helps us to see God as always living. Before the mountains were born, or you brought forth the earth and the world from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

God never needed to be made. God always is. Not just always was, but always is.

In a brief 120 years, unless of course Google intervenes, this planet will be populated by more than 10 billion brand new people.

And the current 7.6 billion of us who occupy the earth at the moment will have vanished off the face of the earth, but not God.

[5 : 53] Never had a beginning, therefore depends on nothing for his existence. He doesn't depend on resources of this world or the universe for his existence. God doesn't need air to breathe or food to eat or water to drink.

He doesn't need help for the work that he decides to do. God always has, within his own life, everything he needs for being.

Everything he needs for who he is as God and for doing all that he chooses to do. Everything in this world needs God, but he doesn't need anything in this world.

This God does not have it within himself, by nature, to go out of existence. Just as we do not have it in our nature to not go out of existence.

We do not have it in our nature to live forever. We all age, we all die, because that is our present nature.

[7 : 05] And that is the case for everything in this world. Increasingly so. Once upon a time, you could buy a TV and it would be a family investment.

For years. Now, two years warranty. If you're lucky. God continues forever unchanged because it is his eternal nature.

God is self-existent. That is, he has life within himself. And God is also self-sufficient. He has everything he needs for his life in himself.

And that is why Jesus claims to be the life in John 14. It's the natural extension of his claim to be God.

Jesus claims to be the life because he is the God who is self-existent and self-sufficient.

[8 : 07] Last week, we took a quick glimpse at John chapter 1. And there, John asserts that Jesus is the son of God. He is equal with God.

And that he is God's agent for creating all that is. And it also says this in verse 4 of John 1.

In him was life. And that life was the light of all mankind. And a couple of chapters later, in John 5.26, that claim is expanded and clarified.

As the father has life in himself, he has granted the son also to have life in himself. Jesus is the life because he shares in the self-existing life of God.

That's the first reason why Jesus claims here to be the life. But secondly, as you go through John's gospel, what you notice is that John's main concern is that this self-existing life of Jesus, because he's God, is in fact light for humanity.

[9 : 26] That is, John's main interest in Jesus being the life and the light is for the salvation of humanity. Jesus is the source of eternal life.

Jesus has come to impart his life to us. In John 3, Jesus explains his death on the cross in terms of it being salvation and eternal life to all who believe in him.

So Jesus is the life, firstly because he's the God who always existed and from whom all life and existence flows.

And because he's the savior of humanity and the source of eternal life for those who believe in him. In fact, he makes this claim specific in John 11.25.

I am the resurrection and the life. See what he's saying there? What he's saying is my life conquering death means life for you.

[10 : 41] The one who believes in me will live even though he die. And whoever lives by believing in me will never die.

His resurrection guarantees our life. And so all of his claims here in John hang on the resurrection of Jesus.

If he didn't come back from the dead, then all of his claims to be the life are null and void.

The apostle Paul said the same thing. If the resurrection didn't happen, then Christianity is pointless. It's useless. It's a fallacy. And so what I want to do now is I want to jump back into Mark 16.

And allow the resurrection of Jesus to challenge us, to give us hope and to change the course of our lives. This word of challenge for our minds is there in Mark 16 verse 6.

[11 : 52] Now that verse there is a challenge to our minds.

Jesus, that is the challenge is that Jesus came back to life after he was executed by the Romans. The Bible says that after Jesus was killed, he came back to life and he appeared to his followers. The Bible says that the reason why the followers of Jesus didn't go home after his execution and the reason why Christianity exploded to become dominant in the Roman Empire within 200 years and today the largest and most widespread of all religious faiths on the planet today penetrating every culture is because Jesus rose from the get.

And yet, this is Chatswood, 2018 in increasingly secular society and most people around us just don't believe that and I get that.

And so in challenging our minds it's so crucial for us here not to be intellectually lazy. Before we reject the resurrection some thought needs to be given to alternative historically plausible explanations as to the reason why things the way they are.

[13 : 43] Now a general trend in our society is rather than looking at the evidence what follows instead is accusations that the texts like for instance Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are not reliable.

That's a general trend in our society is to you can't trust anything that was you know from the past. So in to justify ignorance there's a temptation to call the historical documents legends made up by gullible people and so Mark challenges that here for us.

In fact, three times in eight verses in Mark 15 verse 40 in 15 47 and in 16 verse 1 Mark specifically writes down the names of the eyewitnesses who saw it all and Mark writes down the name Mary Magdalene Mary the mother of James and Salome.

so why why three times does he mention it? Three times he mentions these names and the answer of one New Testament scholar who understands a whole lot more about this stuff and historical ancient historiography than I do which is not hard says that that the way this is written is the marks of ancient historians not legend even ancient historians outside of the Christian faith not legend these women are clearly described as eyewitnesses and so if you look at 15 verse 40 some women were watching again in 15 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James saw where he was laid then in 16 verse 4 when they looked up they saw that the stone which was very large had been rolled away and then in verse 5 of chapter 16 as they entered the tomb they saw and then in the verse 6 see the place where they laid him it's pretty obvious that what Mark is doing here is he's seeing these women specifically as eyewitnesses to the death to the burial and the resurrection of Jesus this in itself is slam dunk proof that the resurrection is history not legend according to historians one of the strongest early arguments however against the truth of Christianity is that the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus historical accounts of the resurrection of Jesus are based on the eyewitness testimony of women that's one of the big arguments against it a second century philosopher named

Celsus was one of the early opponents of Christianity and he wrote that the resurrection of Jesus was a lie because it records historically that women were the eyewitnesses and women according to this guy are hysterical and unreliable and people went oh Celsus that's a good point yes they are yeah yeah unreliable women that's a real problem for Christianity it was it was an incredibly strong argument because in ancient cultures women were marginalized and it was hard to believe in their testimony and so people like Celsus said Mark Matthew Luke John these guys have all made it up they've all made it up but this is the very culture that Mark

[18 : 02] Matthew Luke John are writing into and if Mark was making it up then he would never have put women down and specifically emphatically included women as the eyewitnesses to Jesus empty tomb unless of course they actually were the only way to account historically for the women being recorded as eyewitnesses to the resurrected Jesus is that they were in fact eyewitnesses to the resurrection Jesus this is never written not written as legend at all so Mark is challenging our world view here he has written this as an historical documentation of actual accounts events that challenge the way we see the world and at this point it's easy for some to say okay well this stuff is written as history but you know they kind of got the facts a little muddled ancient people were kind of gullible they're not like us modern people we don't get fooled by it's easy for us to assume that

these people were just you know open to the idea of resurrection where we're not open to it we got modern science where they didn't have it let's not be too quick to assume that they were ignorant and they were gullible one thing you notice as you read through

Mark's gospel is that Jesus tells his disciples quite clearly that I'm going to die and I'm going to rise again on the third day is it's there in chapter eight twice in chapter nine and again in chapter 10 which for Mark who spares ink on paper that's a lot of times to emphasize it the weird thing is the third day arrives and no one's expecting the resurrection no one's anticipating the resurrection of Jesus the blokes aren't around the women had in fact bought spices for to anoint a dead body you know on the Friday as they wheeled their trolleys through woolies and you know they went past the spice section and they're all on sale they went oh darn it we're not going to need that they're like yes yes spices for a dead body we need spices to anoint Jesus dead body he'd only just you know they didn't know they hadn't cottoned on he'd only borrowed the tomb for three days and on the third day the disciples are sitting around having breakfast without bacon thinking hey guys it's the third day do you think we should just down the road and have a look can't hurt let's just go and see let's go and have a look no one's expecting the resurrection and when they got to the tomb the only thing they hadn't thought of was who's going to open the stone for us they were discussing that on the way they never expected an empty tomb the resurrection took everyone by surprise it was as impossible for them to believe as it is for us today and the first thought at seeing the empty tomb was not that

Jesus was true to his word and come back to life but that someone had stolen his body the point is that you know if you have doubts about the resurrection so did they but they allowed the evidence which is evidence there for us today as well to challenge their worldview it's normal to question the validity of something like the resurrection but if you do at least for integrity sake for your own integrity sake then you have to come up with an alternative historically plausible reason why this ragtag group of cowards exploded to all corners of the globe and penetrated vastly different cultures and has changed the world for 20 centuries a hoax doesn't do that if we reject the resurrection we have to come up with an alternative historically plausible explanation of what happened with the body of

Jesus and the Christians in the first century the Romans and the Jews every single one of them every single one of them historically all agree that the tomb of Jesus was empty you can go to a Jewish historian you can go to a Roman historian and they will say exactly the same thing the tomb of Jesus was empty so what happened with the body if we reject the resurrection then we have to come up with an alternative historically plausible reason why hundreds of people claim to have seen him resurrection why the opponents of Christianity could not and did not produce a body and why these early Christians most of whom were cowards before the crucifixion joyfully gave their lives to proclaim the message of the resurrection of Jesus after so his life challenges our minds but if we allow his life to challenge our minds then his life will give us hope his life is in fact mercy to us that's the point of

John when he talks about life and light it is God's mercy to us his grace to our hearts look at this wonderful word you can just slip across it not even notice it in chapter 16 verse 7 go tell his disciples and Peter he's going ahead of you into Galilee and there you will see him just as he told you to understand what an incredible word of grace and hope this is let's consider what wasn't said to the disciples and Peter he didn't say to the women you go and tell those faithless backstabbing cowards those guys who deserted me who denied me that I might see them if they grovel and frankly they better grovel that of course would have been warranted given what they did to him instead what we see here is a word of grace

[25 : 13] Jesus is in fact forgiving them and he's calling them back to himself even before they have repented this this is a word of grace it's a word of mercy it's a word of forgiveness it's a word of hope and the biggest word of grace and hope is simply the name Peter why signal out Peter go and tell my disciples and Peter why is this so special it's because at the end of chapter 14 Peter does what he promised he would never do and he denied Jesus three times he emphatically denied Jesus he abandons Jesus he is it's a terrible betrayal by the head guy of the disciples he turns his back on God and runs to save his own skin and so if the word to the women was simply women go and tell the disciples

Peter in that moment could well have concluded this is not a word for me this does not apply to me not after what I've done for him this does not apply to me I've abandoned him and therefore he's

abandoned me Jesus specifically says to the women through the angel I have plans for my disciples even Peter Peter the biggest screw up even for him he becomes the biggest of the leaders of the early church he he he screw up the biggest his repentance is the deepest and his grasp of grace becomes the greatest the good news of Christianity is that salvation is by grace it's not by works it's not by effort or it's not by strength salvation comes to us by the weakness of Jesus dying for us on the cross salvation eternal life comes to us by

Jesus when we admit our inability when we admit our weakness when we admit our failure when we admit we need a saviour Jesus is the saviour we need forgiveness and life is offered to Peter in this word of grace and it's offered to us in the resurrection of Jesus you see when a criminal gets convicted and they're sent to jail and they complete their jail sentence fully completely they totally satisfy the sentence and when they walk out of prison the law has no longer has any claim on them anymore they are free Jesus Christ came to pay the penalty for our crimes against God it was a huge penalty it was a huge sentence it was a crime against

God that requires death and he who is the source of all life the self sufficient in his own life self existent in his own life surrendered that life so that we deserving of death might have life forever he who is the source of life self sufficient in his life surrendered that life so that we deserving of death might have life forever just like his life forever death and he must have satisfied the penalty fully because he walked out alive and free never to die again death could not hold him down in Jesus God has stamped paid in full right across history so that no one misses it it's because

Jesus was raised from the dead God can come to us with the word of grace and offer us life forever just like his forever life and so if we allow his life to challenge our minds and then his life will give us hope and then lastly his life will give us purpose to our life and in fact what I would suggest to you on mission month it reshapes the way we live now the purpose I speak of is captured in one little word go in Mark 16 go go and tell people about the resurrected Jesus go and communicate in every way possible that Jesus offers us life forever we who deserve death have been given life forever it's why I think verse 8 the way Mark 16 ends is so shocking it's a shocking way to end this gospel account trembling and bewildered the women went out and fled from the tomb they said nothing to anyone because they were afraid the resurrection is so magnificent news how could we not shout it out the resurrection is the answer to our deepest longing every one of us wants to live forever maybe not for a thousand years with our current ills burdens pains maybe not

[31 : 19] I'd agree with that come Lord Jesus but every one of us wants to live forever there's something in us that wants to live it's why baby boomers still wear jeans because we want the fountain of youth to exist and because Juan Ponce de Leon did not find it we think Levi's might have it we want to be young and vibrant and healthy because those were the days before crippling emotional pain responsibility and frailty we want to live and we want to live well and one of the main reasons why it's so hard for us to suffer in this life is that we think this physical world is it and when you lose it you lose the best and most precious thing that's why it's so hard for us to suffer resurrection means that it's not it there's more to come resurrection means that

God is going to perfectly remake this world the resurrection changes everything it's the hope for the wheelchair bound for the person with crippling emotional pain no religion in this world mark this no religion in this world no philosophical system in this world except biblical christian faith promises us new and perfect minds hearts and bodies forever forever only in the gospel of jesus christ do people find so much hope for life the resurrection of jesus changes everything you see if you know that this is not the only tangible concrete life who cares what people do to you the resurrection makes you free from this life enough to be brave to be courageous sacrificial and generous and patient and joyful the resurrection means that you can face the worst that this life throws at you with joy and with hope according to 1 corinthians 15 which is the resurrection chapter in the bible the resurrection means that you can give yourself fully completely serving god in this world with purpose and meaning and joy in fact it ends with saying serving the lord is not a vanity oh man to get to the end of your life and say it has all been worth it to get to the end of your life and say none of it's been a vanity and the only way that you can have that is life in jesus to finish it and to say it's all had purpose it's all had meaning the resurrection means life forever with joy not just a thousand years jesus promises eternal joy the end of the bible has got this goal of all things god dwelling with his people no more tears no more death no more mourning no more crying no more pain to the thirsty he promises water without cost from the spring of the water of life free access to the water of life not the fountain of youth jesus came that we might have life and have it to the fullest one ponce

de leon never found it but jesus purchased it he purchased it for us and he offers us never ending life to us jesus said i am the way the only way the only truth and the only life no one comes to the father except through me i because he we i as a au every baby while i i