

# Lent V Passion Sunday

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[ 0 : 00 ] We heard Jesus say here in our gospel text, if anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.

! Those words sparked fierce anger from the religious leaders in Israel.! For they knew quite well that Adam had died. Noah died. Abraham died. Isaac died. Jacob died. Joseph died. Such a claim by Jesus seemed absurd. And for these religious leaders, it was nothing short of blasphemy, which meant that Jesus deserved to die.

And if that wasn't brash enough, Jesus went on to say, before Abraham was, I am. In other words, Jesus was claiming to be the eternal God and creator, the one to whom all owe their existence. We began Lent by remembering that we are dust, and to dust we shall return. Here at St. Philip's, we have already laid to rest two of our longtime members, Cal and Betty.

[ 1 : 19 ] The claim that we shall never taste death seems to be suspect, at best. I know we're not supposed to say such things, but it's true, whether we are willing to say it out loud or not.

You see, Lent is pretty easy to grasp. We are born and we die. Walking the grounds of a cemetery attests to this fact.

Every minute of every day, people die. Therefore, the concept of resurrection is something completely foreign and alien to us, because it's not something we have experienced or even witnessed.

But that is the point of our Christian belief. Christianity is about trusting in God. It's not about experiencing everything in this life.

It's not about knowing everything about God or how he works. That would make us God. But what our Lord is teaching us this morning is that we will never die, meaning we will never die eternally.

[ 2 : 41 ] Will we return to the dust? Yes. But the concept of death is final and permanent.

The promise of resurrection, however, is something yet to happen, but it's something that has happened. It did happen.

It happened when our Lord overcame death by rising again after being in the tomb for three days. Therefore, resurrection is a matter of faith and trusting that God will do what he says he will do, what he promises to do, and what he has already done.

Defeating death and the grave and rising again. The reason why we say, remember thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return at the beginning of Lent, is not only to think about death, which it certainly does make us think of that.

It also puts our lives in proper perspective with the hope that we have something beyond the grave. We have hope beyond the grave.

[ 3 : 55 ] Just as Adam was taken from the dust of the ground and received the breath of life and became a living being, so now we have been given the Spirit of God who imparts life to us.

And we receive this life not from dust, but from water. We were baptized into Christ Jesus. We were made new creatures in him as we now share in his life.

We share in his death. We share in his resurrection. And we share in his ascension. And though we shall all pass from this life, the promise is that we will never taste death, meaning the finality of all things.

You see, we don't move from existence to non-existence. Instead, our bodies rest in the grave as our souls are united to God and to his church expectant, waiting for that day when all who rest in the grave will be resurrected to new life.

On that day, our souls will be reunited with our bodies and we shall live again eternally. That's the promise.

[ 5 : 19 ] Our resurrected bodies will no longer be given to pain, to death, to suffering, to hurt. And baptism is our entrance into this new life as we seek to follow God, trusting in his word.

And our Lord's promise of never tasting death shakes the fear off of death. We no longer need to fear death. And it replaces fear with faith in Christ Jesus, who has already overcome death by way of his own resurrection.

But before we get to Easter, we have to finish our journey in Lent, making our way then to Holy Week. You see, our Lord was put to death for claiming to have power over death as he proclaimed that he is the creator and God over all things.

He is the reason that all things came into existence. And the God and creator of all things came to this earth in order to save us, to rescue us.

In order to reverse the curse of sin and death that lays upon us. And he gives us life. Therefore, Jesus, the God-man, endured the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion, so that he might transform death into life.

[ 6 : 51 ] And whoever keeps his word shall never taste the finality of all things. Death. Yes, our bodies will weaken.

Yes, they will decay. They will one day rest from all the toil and labor of this life in a grave. But our bodies will be raised up from the grave.

That is our hope. That is the heart of the Christian faith. That is what the creator does.

He gives life. He gives immortality by his glorious resurrection as we are now united to him. And it begins in baptism. Dear friends, this is our hope and comfort.

This is your joy. This is your joy, even in the midst of pain, loss, and death. Therefore, may we live lives of purpose.

[ 8 : 01 ] Putting away the ever-pervasive pessimism and nihilism of our day. Our Lord's resurrection and the promise that we too will be raised is the hope that we have as we think about people like Cal, Betty.

As I think about my dad. Father Randall thinks about his mother. And each of you, as you mourn the loss of loved ones.

Thanks be to God, death does not have the final word. It has no power. It has lost all of its power. Lent and all of its practices of fasting and praying and giving of alms, they are all good disciplines. But they are a means to an end.

And these disciplines help us as baptized Christians to take the focus off of ourself. And to put our focus upon God and one another. But the end of Lent is resurrection.

[ 9 : 13 ] And eternal life. As we seek by God's grace. To keep God's word. Dearly beloved, let us then walk the road with our Lord to Calvary.

Knowing that eternal communion with our God is our goal. It is our purpose. In life. So many times we get so caught up.

With all the things of day to day. We get so distracted. That we forget about our purpose in life. Our Lord promises that we will never taste the end.

The finality of all things. Which is called death. Amen. And Jesus said in John chapter 11 verse 25. I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me though he die. Yet shall he live. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

[ 10 : 22 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.