

**Famous Last Words – “Father, Into Your Hands”
Lk. 23:44-46**

Introduction:

The question that we ask is: “How do we feel about death?”

The main question that we want to answer today is: “Could we make this same comment at the point of our death?”

Today, we are going to use this statement of Christ as a springboard to talk about death. Many people avoid this subject. But as we will notice later, death is nothing to fear. But instead, death is just the beginning of our eternal life.

We have all known someone who has died.

I. Death is inevitable.

- A. Unless Christ returns first, we are all going to die.
- B. From the very beginning, we read of the death of man.
 - 1. Part of the punishment of the sin of Adam was that he would return to the ground from which he was formed.
 - a. **Gen. 3:19** - In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.
 - 2. From the time of the garden until now, death is a part of life.
 - a. **Ps. 89:48** - What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?
 - b. Solomon wrote about death in the book of Ecclesiastes.
 - 1) **Ecc. 3:2a** - A time to be born, and a time to die;
 - 2) **Ecc. 3:19-20** - For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. {20} All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.
 - 3) **Ecc. 12:7** - Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.
 - 3. Even Jesus understood that He was going to die.
 - a. He had talked about His death.
 - 1) **Mt. 16:21** - From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.
 - 2) **Mt. 17:22-23** - Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, {23} and they will kill Him, and the

third day He will be raised up.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

- 3) **Mt. 20:17-19** - Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, {18} “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, {19} and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.”
 - b. The knowledge of His death is seen in this statement on the cross.
- C. There are only two characters in the entire Bible that did not die.
 1. Enoch
 - a. **Gen. 5:21-24** - Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. {22} After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. {23} So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. {24} And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.
 - b. **Heb. 11:5** - By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.
 2. Elijah
 - a. **II Kgs. 2:11** - Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.
 3. There were those who died and were raised from the dead; but the fact of the matter is that they suffered through death.

II. To the Christian, death is not a bad thing.

- A. After this inevitable death, there is going to be a judgment to follow.
 1. **Heb. 9:27** - And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
 2. **II Cor. 5:10** - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
- B. If we are ready for this judgment, death is not a bad thing.
 1. God Himself talks good about the death of His child.
 - a. **Ps. 116:15** - Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.
 - b. **Rev. 14:13** - Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”
 2. If we are faithful, our death is the best day of our life.
 - a. **Heb. 11:13** - These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them,

embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

- b. **Ecc. 7:1** - A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth;
 - c. **Pr. 14:32** - The wicked is banished in his wickedness, but the righteous has a refuge in his death.
 - d. **Phil. 1:21, 23** - For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. {23} For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.
- C. It is only when our life on earth is over that we can claim that great reward.
1. Whether our life ends in death or with His coming, it is then that we will come to realize that great home.
 2. **I Cor. 15:50-57** - Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. {51} Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—{52} in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. {53} For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. {54} So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” {55} “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” {56} The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. {57} But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 3. **I Thes. 4:13-17** - But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. {14} For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. {15} For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. {16} For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. {17} Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.
- D. When Paul was coming to the end of his life, notice what he said.
1. **II Tim. 4:6-8** - For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. {7} I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. {8} Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.
 2. Today, could we say the same thing?

Conclusion:

- A. It should be our aim to die just as Jesus did.
 - 1. Not on the cross, but with the confidence that Jesus had in His death.
 - a. Christ knew where He stood in terms of the judgment.
 - 1) He knew that He had no sin.
 - 2) He knew His destiny (Lk. 23:43).
 - 2. What better way to die than to know where you are going (Lk. 23:43) and to know that your work is complete (Jn. 19:30).
- B. For preachers, funerals fall into two basic categories (Bill Irby in bulletin article).
 - 1. Notice the two categories.
 - a. Those for people who are lost.
 - b. Those for people who are saved.
 - 2. Which one are you?