

Sermon May 28, 2017 - Easter 7

Life Eternal is Where Jesus Is

John 17:1-11



Dear friends in Christ.

Last Thursday May 25th, we observed in the church calendar, Ascension Day. In which our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven, as we confess in our Creeds, and now seated at the right Hand of the Father, and from there he will come to Judge the living and the dead.”

He lives for eternity, giving us also that life, eternal life. But if so, is life eternal just in

Heaven? Or is it here even now?

For our comfort it is good to know that where Jesus is, there is life eternal. And through the Holy Spirit we transcend time and space to heaven, to God’s Kingdom, to life eternal. And more, we can use our three senses—sight, hearing, and especially touch—to identify where life eternal is, did you know that? Yes we can, for where Jesus is, so there is life eternal.

But where is he? Where’s eternal life?

I. Eternal life is where Jesus will be.

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When we think of eternal life, we think of a place called heaven, where Jesus will be when we die or he comes back on the Last Day. When we arrive, life there will be endless. It will be everlasting. We will be with Jesus, and how glorious that will be! Until he returns on the Last Day, we will be at rest, blissful in his presence. But when that day of resurrection comes and Jesus brings our bodies out of the grave, then we will know eternal life in all its fullness.

With our new eyes, we will see incredible colors and beauty. All creation will be remade with stars visible in all their multitudes. Lakes will be crystal clear and mountains will be majestic. Animals will live in harmony. What wonders we will see in eternal life!

And we will hear the most incredible music. Praises and honor sung to Jesus and his Father on the throne. Choirs of angels and resurrected believers will lift our spirits to heights never before experienced. Think of that one song that moves you to joyful tears and imagine that being sung for all eternity.

And yes, we will have fingers and hands to hold one another once again.

Illustration: A seminary professor who teaches pastoral counseling, once, told us that widows and widowers miss the touch of a spouse. It is lonely, but that loneliness is intensified because the everyday touches of a hug, hands being held, a kiss, a gentle caress are missing. Without human touch, we wither. Our grief reaches deeper into our spirits because these moments of loving touch disappear. But here is the good news, in the eternal life of resurrected glory, we will hug and touch those we loved and who also believed in this life.

Yes, eternal life is where Jesus will be. With sights, sounds, and touches, we will live endlessly in everlasting joy with Jesus.

II. Eternal life is where Jesus has been.

Eternal life is found also where Jesus has been! What is that mean? Think of this, Jesus prayed that he would be glorified and he would glorify the Father. Now when we hear the word glorify, we think of someone who's won a championship or gold medal, the person stands on a pedestal and receives the glory and adoration of those cheering. Or glory could be of somebody who has obtained any great achievement as well. But the apostle John had something more basic in mind. He used glorify as simply revealing someone to other people, simply yet profound and life changing. It shows who someone is. Jesus is praying that he will reveal the heavenly Father to us.

One time, Jesus was with his disciples and told them that he is the way and the truth and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through him. One of his disciples, Philip, said, "Show us the Father, and it is enough." Jesus responded, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:8-9). Jesus glorifies the Father by showing who the Father is and what he thinks of us. What we see when we look at Jesus is that our God is a God of love and life, and that is his glory.

The one day Jesus does something out of this world. A man was in such a pitiful state. He had been kicked out of the village where he once lived. He was now destitute and dependent on others to give him food. His clothes are rags, really. No one could come close to him. If anyone did, he would yell out "Leper!" and everyone had to avoid him. No one had touched him for months. He is so lonely. The pain goes deeper than the sores on his skin. No one dared to touch him without suffering great consequences, not only the risk of being infected but also that person would be declared unclean, guilty even of death.

But Jesus does something different, he comes by and stops. He goes up to the man and touches him. Yes, Jesus heals him with a word. The sores are gone. But the simple touch is one of love. The man is given his life back. He, the leper infected man, sees God's glory, and in turn God is glorified as this act of love brings joyous praise to the man's lips. He is given life and life eternal in that touch.

But there is more, remember the crucifixion scene? There were the sounds of agony coming from the three crosses at Mt. Calvary. Two criminals on either side of Jesus. The stench of death hovers in the air. Blood and sweat run into Jesus' mouth as he tastes the suffering required for the death in this world. One of the criminals asks for a blessing, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Now listen closely to Jesus glorify his Father. "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:42-43). A criminal who deserves to die is given life, eternal life, from Jesus.

Jesus glorified his Father. Not on a pedestal and with cheers but on a cross with jeering going on all around him. Yet, the sights and sounds of that day declare the glory of God as we see and hear God's love giving eternal life. Perhaps the most well-known Bible verse declares it well: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Yes, there is life eternal in the Cross, where Jesus was once and for all! There is eternal life where Jesus has been!

III. There is eternal where Jesus is now.

There is life eternal where Jesus is now. As you see, Jesus did not stay dead. He rose from the grave and is here now with us, bringing eternal life to each of those who trust him, his promises and his work on our behalf.

As you see dear friends, life eternal begins not after you die, or Christ comes again, no! Eternal life begins as soon as Jesus gives us life lived in the love and mercy of the Father.

Think about this, when a child is brought to be baptized, there life eternal begins, there as he or she is baptized “In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” There that child and those who witness baptism, see it, hear it and even touch it. Eternal life has begun in that child’s life as Jesus scoops him or her up as his own child. When you live by faith in Jesus, forgiven and loved by the Father, you are living eternal life right then and there.

Or, when you come up for the Lord’s Supper, there too you will find eternal life because as Jesus promised, he is truly present in the bread and wine. There too, you can touch it. Taste it. There too you are told that “This true body and blood of Jesus strengthen and preserve you in true faith until life everlasting.”

Right here, at this altar, you receive eternal life because Jesus is here through his body and blood.

But, he also said as he prayed to the Father: “For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.” He said.” (John 17:8-9)

What is that mean? It means that you also find eternal life in his word, the living word of God is life eternal, even hear and now. So whenever you gather, for worship and follow the liturgy, there you hear God’s word, the readings, the sermon, but also your serious and dedicated study of God’s word. There you get life eternal. There you read and glory in God’s glory, in the life eternal he gives.

Yes, life eternal is in Jesus words and the sacraments he instituted for us.

IV. And, lastly eternal life is where Jesus is with you.

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Eternal life is not so much a place in the future dear friends. Eternal life is not just what happened in the past. Eternal life is not just here in the church, but eternal life is where Jesus is. He will be there in glory forever, and so is eternal life. Besides worship, the sacraments, his Word, Jesus is with you, and in you wherever you go as well. And when you are with Jesus, and Jesus is within you, you are living eternal life as well.

And that you can see, hear, touch, and live out in the everyday activity and interactions you have with the world around you.

At the gas station when someone comes up to you, saying, “My car is on empty, and I don’t have any money for gas.” It looks like Jesus leading you to use your credit card to put gas in the tank. It sounds like a pleasant conversation as the gas is pumped. It’s the touch of a handshake as you speak a word of blessing.

At the restaurant when the server brings you your food. It looks like a prayer, but even more. Eternal life is Jesus leading you to speak kindly to the server, to clean up

the table so the busser has an easier job, and a more than generous tip for all the staff that saw you pray, holding hands with one another.

Where is eternal life? Where Jesus will be. Where Jesus has been. Where Jesus is right now. Where Jesus is with you every day.

Eternal life is where Jesus will be, has been, is now, and is with you—wherever you may be.

Now, what a treasure eternal life is because it's simply life with the Father through his Son, Jesus. Amen.