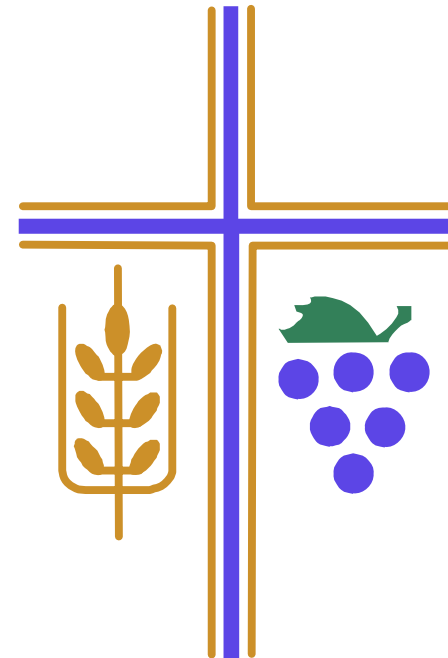


Where Death and Life Meet



A Bible study by Rev. Dr. Todd Wilken



Death's Dominion

We live in a dying world. It appears as though death rules in all of creation. Everywhere you look you find life. But everywhere you find life, you also find death.

Death and life cannot coexist peacefully. Where death and life meet, it appears that death always wins.

Read Genesis 1:27-31.

- Is death a “natural” part of God’s living creation?
- How do abortion, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia and assisted suicide present death as “natural”?

So, how did this happen? How did death gain dominion in God’s living creation? God did not make death. God made only life. In fact, God gave Adam and Eve dominion over all life.

God gave Adam and Eve *only* life. God did not give them death. God warned them in effect, “Do not take what I have not given!”

Read Genesis 2:16-17.

- What did God say they *could* do?
- What did God say they *could not* do and why?

- Jesus entered the world through the womb of the virgin Mary. How does this shape how Christians look at life in the womb?
- Jesus lived with all the effects of our sin in His body. How does this shape how Christians look at sickness and infirmity?
- Jesus died a real human death for all mankind. How does this shape how Christians look at dying and death?

Death still claims dominion. But we know that all of Death’s claims are false. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection for us, Death can no longer claim dominion anywhere—even in the grave.

In the presence of Jesus, death is powerless; He has defeated death. In the presence of Jesus, the tomb opens, releasing its captive; He holds the keys of death and Hades. In the presence of Jesus, death and decay are undone; He has removed the curse once and for all. In the presence of Jesus the dead live.

Laugh to scorn the gloomy grave

And at death no longer tremble;

He, our Lord Who came to save

Will at last His own assemble.

They will go their Lord to meet,

Treading death beneath their feet.

(Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense, st. 9, The Lutheran Hymnal)

- When will death finally be destroyed?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:56-57.

- Think of everything Jesus did during His life and ministry. Give examples of Jesus' victory over sin, the law, and death.

We live in a dying world. It appears as though death rules in all of creation. Everywhere you look you find life. But everywhere you find life, you also find death.

Death and life cannot coexist peacefully. Where death and life meet, it appears that death always wins. But Jesus' death was different. Jesus lived without sin for you. Jesus died bearing your sin. Jesus rose again, leaving your sin and your death dead in the grave. Jesus has ended death's dominion.

But death is still trying to stake its claim. In abortion, death still claims dominion over life in the womb. In embryonic stem cell research, death claims dominion over life in the laboratory. In euthanasia and assisted suicide, death claims dominion over life in the wheelchair, hospital, and nursing home. But these are false claims based on false promises.

- What are the false promises of abortion? Of embryonic stem cell research? Of euthanasia and assisted suicide?
- Discuss how these false promises are counterfeits of the true promises of the Gospel.

Read Genesis 3:1-6, 19.

- Adam and Eve took the one thing God did not give: death. How were Adam and Eve tempted to take what God had not given?
- What was the false promise made by death?
- What was the result of Adam's sin for man? For creation?
- What false promises do abortion, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia and assisted suicide make?

The Bible tells us, "So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died" (Genesis 5:5).

"And he died." This begins a refrain that runs through every book of the Old Testament. It is a refrain of death: ". . . and he died . . . and he died . . . and he died . . . and he died."

Scan Genesis, chapter 5. The pattern is unmistakable—death has taken over God's living creation. Death is ruling over all of Adam's children.

Read Romans 5:12-14.

- How did death enter the world?
- How did death spread?

- How does death rule?
- How has death taken over the way we think about life in the womb, in the laboratory, in the wheelchair, hospital and nursing home?

Where Death and Life Meet at the Cross

Death was ruling over God's living creation. Death was ruling over all of Adam's children. Death and life cannot coexist peacefully. Where death and life meet, it appears that death always wins.

It appears that death always wins—even at the Cross. That refrain of death continues from Adam, all the way through the Bible, all the way up to Jesus. At the Cross Jesus died. It appeared as though death had simply taken yet another victim.

But in the case of Jesus, things are not what they appear. Oh yes, Jesus really did die. But Jesus' death did not continue death's dominion. Jesus' death ended death's dominion once and for all.

Read Romans 5:17-20.

- What is the "one Man's righteous act" and the "one Man's obedience"?
- What is different about Jesus' death?
- What does it mean, "just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"?

When Jesus meets death, Jesus dies. But when Jesus dies, Death dies with Him. When Death and Life meet at the Cross of Jesus, Jesus wins.

We confess, "He died and was buried. And on the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures." Jesus rose and left Death dead in the grave.

Read Romans 6:9.

- How did Jesus end death's dominion?

Read Romans 14:7-9.

- What does it mean, "if we die, we die to the Lord"?
- What does it mean, "He is the Lord of both the dead and the living"?

Death's Dominion is Ended

Jesus' resurrection is the end of death's dominion. And Jesus' resurrection is only the beginning.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-26.

- What does it mean that Jesus is "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"?
- When did Jesus put the dominion, authority and power of death under His feet?