

Alton Baptist Church e-Service 21st March 2021

Eternal Life

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You that whether we are in the church building together or thinking about You alone, You are with us and hear our prayers.

Help us to spend time each day singing your praises, reading and contemplating Your Word, praying for one another and those issues You bring to our attention. Amen

Song: O Lord, our Lord How majestic is Your name—

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54s8EVpF2XI>

Prayers - In your own words just praise and thank the Lord, for who He is, for what He is, for what He has done. Confess your need of forgiveness.

Reading: Psalm 8:3-4

³ When I consider Your heavens,
the work of Your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which You have set in place,
⁴ what is man that You are mindful of him,
the son of man that You care for him?

Song: As the deer —

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBppKZ0eJlQ>

Prayers of Praise, Thanks and Intercession

Pray as you feel led. Finish with the Lord's Prayer.

Reading: Mark 9:43-48

⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the

kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where

“their worm does not die,
and the fire is not quenched.”

This passage, containing the words of Jesus, has been described as “Hyperbole” – an unrealistic exaggeration intended to get a point across. That may be the case, but I know a man who had part of his leg cut-off to save his life. My sister had part of her brain removed in an attempt to save her life.

So if people have parts of their bodies removed to extend their life on earth by a few years, perhaps we should pay more attention to the cost of eternal life with God.

Some people have very generously given one of their own kidneys to save or improve the life of someone else; but only for the years they have left on earth. Wouldn't it be nice if you could give something to save or improve someone's eternal life?

Some of us have registered as organ donors, so that in the event of our death we can “save” someone's life – although again only for a few years. But this has no direct effect on their eternal life.

We need to consider something else Jesus said to put this passage into context.

Readings:

Mark 8:31-32 *Jesus predicts his death*

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

Mark 9:30-32 *Jesus predicts his death a second time*

³⁰ They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹ because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.’ ³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

Mark 10:32-34 *Jesus predicts his death a third time*

³² They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. ³³ 'We are going up to Jerusalem,' he said, 'and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, ³⁴ who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.'

Song: My Lord what love is this -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVgmdzQCl6U>

Whilst making his way to Jerusalem to die a hideous death upon a cross, to pay the penalty for our sins, Jesus wanted his disciples to take sin very seriously. The bible tells us that the penalty for sin is death. Jesus was going to pay that penalty, on our behalf, by His death.

We know we all die physically. This is not what Jesus came to prevent.

He was and is concerned with our spiritual life. Since the bible tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), we are all born spiritually dead. We remain spiritually dead until we are born again of the spirit, as explained to Nicodemus in John chapter 3. Whilst we are spiritually dead we are separated from God.

Many people are quite happy to live separately from God, and quite happy to spend eternity, if it exists, separated from God. However they neglect hell.

Hell is only spoken of in the bible by Jesus (although both James the brother of Jesus and Peter refer to it in their letters). Jesus takes it very seriously and warns us that it is not a nice place to spend eternity.

He cares so much that he suffered the cross to give us a way of restoring our relationship with God and avoiding hell. There is no price that we can pay to restore this relationship ourselves. We have to accept and **believe** that only Jesus can pay the price; that he has done so, and we must repent of our sins, ask his forgiveness and invite him into our lives as our Lord and Saviour.

A few more readings to let Jesus have the last word.

Readings:

John 11:21-27 *Jesus comforts the sisters of Lazarus*

²¹ 'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.'

²³ Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'

²⁴ Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'

²⁵ Jesus said to her, **'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'**

²⁷ 'Yes, Lord,' she replied, 'I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.'

John 3:17-18, 36 *Jesus speaking*

¹⁷ "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

Song: Before the throne of God above -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQ6QaZcPphM>

Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us now and always.

AMEN