

Death teaches us that we are not in control. We can't decide when we die or when we live. Suffering is a form of death. We all have to face it to various degrees, and God wants us to face it in faith. Whether you stub your toe or you have a terminal illness, God is teaching you through your suffering to face the pangs of death with faith in his mercy. He is teaching you not to rely on your own strength but to take refuge in your Lord who died and rose for you and promises you eternal life. God uses death to teach us that we cannot contribute anything to our eternal destiny. It is only by his grace and mercy that we live even a second in our bodies. And it is only by his grace in Christ that we have hope for the life to come. He therefore teaches us to rest in his promise of life and salvation. Commend your life and your death to him who created you, redeemed you, and set you apart to be his own.

Sadly, this is the problem with our dying world. The sinful flesh imagines that it can control death. But any attempt to take control of death only results in more of it. Those who promote so called euthanasia – falsely labeled a “good death” – promise that people will die with dignity if they have the ability to end their own suffering. Canada, several countries in Europe, and about five or six states in our country allow the practice of assisted suicide in which someone with an illness is administered lethal drugs by a physician to end one's own life. We're not talking about a cancer patient deciding to end his treatment and commend his life into God's hands. No, these laws allow people to end their lives with poison given to them by a physician.

Another way in which this dying world imagines it can control death is how it treats the tragedy of barrenness. Specialists take and fertilize a woman's egg outside of the womb and then implant it into a woman's womb. Often, this results in removing the extra human embryos, freezing them, or throwing them away. It's a sensitive topic for people, because who would deny that the inability to conceive a child is sad and tragic? But the answer to this sad and tragic situation is not to play God. We have no right to think that we can create human life and then discard it or reserve it for some other purpose. This only results in more death and confusion.

Of course, the most common example of this dying world attempting to control death is the killing of an unborn child. A young woman who finds that she is pregnant may feel as if her life has ended. The fear of miscarriage is a very real thing, which many of us are all too familiar with. The deceitful promoters of abortion take advantage of these genuine fears. They scare vulnerable women into thinking that if they are not able to abort their children, then they will be denied treatment when they suffer a miscarriage or that they will not be able to deliver the child in times of emergency. This, of course, was never the case with our Missouri laws, but the ads on television straight up lied to people to get them to vote in favor of this wicked amendment. They appealed to the natural yet deceitful notion that we can control the outcome of life and death.

But what God creates is always good, even though it has been corrupted by sin. Even if someone is conceived as a result of a sinful act, that little life is still precious to the Lord. The active killing of a child never rights any wrong, no matter how heinous that wrong was. And again, we're not talking about removing an unborn child in an emergency, giving the child as much care as possible, and ultimately commending the child's life to God. No, those who promote abortion are promoting the active murder of unborn children. And they do so precisely because they think that they can be in control of what only God controls.

In the midst of earthly life, snares of death surround us. We live in a dying world. We live in dying bodies. Where shall we go for refuge? To our own ingenuity? To our own imaginations? Should we

simply ignore death, cover it up, and have professionals deal with it for us so that we don't have to pay attention to it? If we do this, then we are only letting the Foe confound us. That's exactly what the devil does. He deceives and lies so he can cause murder and despair. No, we can't ignore death. Instead, we must face it. We must admit that we deserve it. We must face God who alone has the power over it. As we just sang, "We mourn that we have greatly erred, that our sins Thy wrath have stirred. Holy and righteous God! Holy and mighty God! Holy and all merciful Savior! Eternal Lord God! Save us lest we perish in the bitter pangs of death. Have mercy, O Lord!"

Jesus was approached by the leader of a synagogue. Mark and Luke tell us that his name was Jairus. They say that his daughter was dying. In Matthew's account, Jairus tells Jesus that his daughter is already dead. It sounds like Jairus said both that she was dying and that she was dead. This is how death is. It's something that engulfs us on every side. Whether she was on this side or that side of death, she was hovering over death's door. She was facing death. The sooner we see this about ourselves, the more equipped we are to face our Maker and find our refuge only in him. Jairus had nowhere else to go. He begged Jesus to come with him. So our Lord, full of compassion, followed the man to his house.

While they were walking to Jarius's house, there was a woman who had a flow of blood for many years. According to Leviticus 15, a woman who had a discharge of blood would be considered unclean. When she finally stopped bleeding, she would count seven days and then give two turtle doves or young pigeons to the priest for him to offer as sacrifices. These ceremonies of cleanliness were meant to teach the people to rely only on the Lord to cleanse them. He would provide the atoning sacrifice for them. He would purify them from sin. He would save them from death.

But this woman's case was especially sad, because her flow of blood wouldn't stop. She was plagued by death every day, and she didn't have the luxury to ignore it. Mark tells us that she had spent all her money on doctors, but her condition only got worse. She had no control. Where could she for refuge go, where for grace to bless her? As we sang in the hymn, "To Thee, Lord Jesus, only!"

God provides all sorts of remedies to help us deal with suffering and death. He provides medicine and doctors, family and loved ones. He richly and daily provides for all we need to support this body and life. It's good to seek treatment for your illness, your inability to conceive, your chronic pain, or your terminal illness. But don't be fooled into thinking that you can somehow control the outcome. Don't imagine that you don't need to face death. Instead, commend yourself to the Lord. Face him who made heaven and earth, who forms the light and the darkness, and who kills and makes alive. Turn to the Judge of the living and the dead, who alone can save us from the terror of the fiery pit of hell. Recognize that there is nothing you can give him, nothing you can contribute, nothing you can control. And instead, listen to his words and promises.

That poor woman thought that if she only touched Jesus' garment then she would be healed. In fact, she said, "I will be saved!" Giving up on anything else in the world to save her, she was convinced that even the slightest touch of Christ's cloak would give her what she needed. She was right. Her flow of blood stopped immediately. Jesus turned to look at her. Mark and Luke tell us that woman was trembling with fear. After all, she was face to face with the Lord over life and death. We should approach this altar with the same reverence, because here he comes to us in his body and blood. But what did the Lord say to her? He said, "Cheer up, daughter! Your faith has made you well." He said, "Your faith has saved you."

God has designed a woman's body to produce life. Yet the curse of sin has caused pain and toil to accompany childbearing. This doesn't only include the pain that exists in going into labor. It also includes the disappointments, the miscarriages, and any number of things that go wrong inside their bodies. The dying world pretends to care about these things, but their prescription is only more death. If you want to help women like this poor lady in our text, then point them to Christ. Show them that death has lost its sting because Jesus has died for our sins and was raised for our justification. Pray for them. And treat them as daughters of Almighty God. Because when all other earthly help proves to have its limits, when we must all face death and find that our souls are not in our own control, then only the words of our Savior will prove true. Only his mercy will save us.

The woman's faith saved her not because it was so great a virtue. Her faith saved her because of what it held onto. She held onto Jesus, even if she touched only his garment. So when Jesus arrived at the home of Jairus, and that poor father was informed that his daughter had died, Mark and Luke record these encouraging words of our Lord. He said, "Only believe, and your daughter will live." Only believe. Faith alone saves, not because faith has some magic power, not because it is so great of an achievement. Faith alone saves, because only faith holds onto the words of Christ. As Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!"

In the midst of utter woe when our sins oppress us,  
Where shall we for refuge go, where for grace to bless us?  
To Thee, Lord, Jesus, only!  
Thy precious blood was shed to win  
Full atonement for our sin.

God has designed a man to be a protector for his wife and his family, but the curse of sin has caused toil and sweat to accompany his work. Many men, like Jairus, find themselves in helpless situations, overwhelmed and struggling to lead and provide for their homes. Sadly, some even take their own lives, deceived by this dying world that they can control what only God can give. So if you want to help a father whose children are in danger or whose home seems to be crumbling, consider what he needs. Does he need some moral or even financial support? I'm sure he could use that. It no doubt wouldn't hurt for him to learn how to get his house in order so he can lead his family. But as helpful as these things can be, they also have their limits. If you want to help a guy who is sinking under the pressure of being a husband, a father, and a man, then point him to Jesus. Point him to the God Man who bore the sin of the world on his shoulders. Pray for him, and treat him as a son of Almighty God.

We can't solve everyone's problems in this world. Many people promise to do this, but it only leads to disappointment. All of our earthly help has its limits. But the one thing, which excels all help, is the message of the gospel. That Christ has made atonement for our sins and promises to raise us up on the last day – this is truly the answer to all our fears. This message alone turns your grave into a soft bed and your death into a nap. Yes, to a dying world, this is laughable. It seems entirely impractical. But it's true. As surely as Jesus took the daughter of Jairus and commanded her to wake up, and as surely as he came out of the tomb on Easter morning, he promises that we will hear his voice as well. We will rise to face him as the Lord over death. And we will know him forever as the Resurrection and the Life. This is what our faith rests in. Therefore, let us pray:

Holy and righteous God! Holy and mighty God! Holy and all merciful Savior! Eternal Lord God!  
Lord, preserve and keep us in the peace that faith can give. Have Mercy, O Lord! Amen.