

## A New Tomorrow

If you would please, open your bibles to Mathew Chapter 26.

Many times in our lives we will come face to face with death. Not only physical mortality, but, and most often, spiritual death. Dealing with death is one of the most important aspects of religion in general, and Christianity specifically.

Not long before Jesus went to the cross, He spoke to the disciples about his death. #i"e so many other times, they missed the point of what He was saying. He wanted to prepare them by explaining that they would all deny knowing him. %eginning in Mathew 26:31, (eter speaks up, ) \*hough all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. + Jesus answered him, ) , erily I say unto thee, \*hat this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.-

(eter again declared, ) \*hough I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.)

Matthew adds ) #i"ewise also said all the disciples.-

In my bible, a couple of pages later, I see the heading, ) (eter's Denial Jesus.) \*hat passage /Matthew 26:60-75 tells how (eter did indeed deny Jesus three times. \*he rooster crows, ) 5nd he went outside and wept bitterly.)

\*hose haunting words help explain one of the reasons why (eter seemed to take Jesus' death so hard. I wonder if his weeping may have continued for the next three days. No doubt those words echoed in his ears, ) 7ven if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.) 5nd the other words ( ) I don't know the man.) \*he regret. \*he guilt. \*he embarrassment. !ow could he ever overcome such a major blunder? !ow could he ever show his face among his friends again? \*he words would surely haunt him for the rest of his life.

Not hardly:

ust a few days after (eter had spoken those words, the risen Jesus comes back to (eter with a question that would replace those haunting words with words that would redefine (eter's life and mission. \*hree times Jesus asked him, ) (eter do you love me.) \*hree times (eter said, ) <ou know I love you.) =rom the same lips that said, ) I don't know the man:) came the words, ) <es, #ord, you know I love you.)

\*he next thing you hear from (eter is his famous Day of Pentecost sermon. / 5 cts 24 #ater in the book of 5 cts, the public officials threatened to throw him in jail if he continued to speak about Jesus. \*o those who had power to put him in prison and take his life he said, ) > hether it be right in the sight of God to hear men unto you more than unto God, judge ye. =or we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.) / 5 cts @A012B4

(eter gives us hope. His life shows us that the foolish words we speak today need not haunt us from now on. (romises that we make, then break in the next breath, need not shape our lives. >ords that we speak from a prideful heart need not be what people remember about us. \*hose haunting words can be replaced with words of confidence, hope, and assurance.

How about you? Not any phrases stuck in your head that you wish you could erase. I will never use that kind of language again. I will never be unfaithful. I don't care what it costs, I will always follow you, Lord. You said them, then you failed them. You spoke those words again. You used that language. You were unfaithful. You didn't just fail once, but again and again and again. You acted like you never knew the Lord. These words, your very own words, are haunting.

However, there is hope: Listen as Jesus gives you another chance. Do you love me? Do you really love me? Do you really, really love me? Here is your opportunity to replace those haunting words with words that will carry you through all the way to the end. What will you say? Yes, Lord, you know I love you.

\*here will be a new tomorrow

\*here will be a brighter day

\*here will be a new tomorrow

Love will find a way

These lines are from a song the English pop singer, Annie DeChannon, was singing over the airwaves several years ago. Actually, it was part of a trend in popular music in which young people began to express real concern for this new tomorrow, this new chance, this new opportunity. I still believe in tomorrow although my life is a mess today, they sang in another song. His concern for tomorrow was expressed also in a Broadway play of the time. In it, a young man who had dropped out of school and been estranged from his parents was now hooked on drugs. Out of the depths of what he sees as a hopeless situation he cries out, How I wish life was like a notebook so you could tear out the part where you've made all the mistakes and start over with a page that is fresh and clean. A new start, a new page, a new opportunity, a new tomorrow. I will love find a way.

One of the amazing things about the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that God's love does find a way. Nothing we have done in life prevents God from giving us a new tomorrow. No mistake, no wrong decision, no wrongful act of any kind can defeat God's will to forgive. Nothing we do can bind us irrevocably to the past because God is always here to show us the way to new life in a new tomorrow! Sometimes in the most surprising and wondrous ways.

The 1980s were, for the most part, a time of peace and economic prosperity. Starting in 1980 and continuing until today, it seems things are in constant flux. The world is always changing. It is important for us in this time of tumultuous change to realize that God is in the midst of all this. God is ever-present at these cutting edges of our individual lives, our life as a Church and our life as a society. It is important for us to realize that it is right in the midst of the turmoil and tension that God somehow is opening up that new tomorrow to us. It is important for us to realize that often it is in the most tumultuous of times that we are given our best opportunities to take some giant steps into a new tomorrow.

There is a new tomorrow for us all, because Love has found a way. This means that beginning now, at this new moment, you can begin to work more intensely at your own personal growth and development, knowing that it is all worthwhile, knowing that you really are going somewhere, knowing that you are in God's plans, eternally. The wonderful thing about this is that you can carry this trust in a new tomorrow into all your

relationships, with family and with others. You can enter into every point of your personal life rejoicing in the absolute certainty that God is always with you, ready to give you a new start, a new opportunity, a new life, even through and beyond death itself: Moreover, we in this Church and this community can redouble our efforts to do something about community problems and world problems because we "now that God is already at work" in the midst of it.

"The world out there is dark". There is much hopelessness in it. It is dying for people to come with the light. Don't you hear it in the tone of voice of people all around you? Every day they are asking, "Is there any good news from the Church? Is there any good word from God? Is there any sign of hope on the horizon that you can point to? Is there any point to our living?" You are here to answer, "Yes, there is good news in the midst of all the bad news. Christ has risen." Christ brings us new life and a new tomorrow. In Christ we become children of God perpetually. Ever, as Jesus shows us, from God's perspective no distinction is made between those we call the living and those we call the dead. "For all live unto him," Jesus says in John 11:25.

I returned from Germany recently. The small town where I was staying gets only one English speaking radio station and that's CNN. The coverage of the war in Iraq is somewhat different on the international version of CNN than it is in the H.C. On one occasion, a reporter with a company of H.C. Marines was giving a report. It was early evening and the company had stopped a march to have supper. The men were experiencing bone-deep fatigue, anxiety, fear and death. One huge Marine was leaning back against a truck eating his cold meal from a tin can. He had been in the field for many days and his clothes were stiff with dirt and cold. His heavily bearded face, encrusted with mud, was almost expressionless because of the immense fatigue he was feeling. His correspondent, obviously trying to get an exciting lead for his next report, asked that Marine a strange and, I think, insensitive question: "If I were God and could grant you anything you wished, what would you want most?" The Marine stood motionless for a few moments. Then he looked up at the reporter and said, "Just give me tomorrow."

You live in a world that is very uncertain of its future. But we pray, "Why Thy Kingdom come," because we "now that God has found a way and there will be a tomorrow: God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. All are alive for Him."

There will be a new tomorrow

There will be a brighter day

There will be a new tomorrow

God will find a way

Before you came into this world you were an unborn baby. You all were. You all, in going from this world into another one we are still unborn babies so far as that other world is concerned. Now a baby not yet born, still tucked under his mother's heart, might say to himself, "This is a wonderful place. It's warm. I'm fed, I'm taken care of, and I'm secure. This is a great world where I now am. I like it." And then someone might say to him, "But you're not going to stay here. You have to move on. You're going to die out of this place. You're going into another world." That baby would look upon the process of birth

as if it were death since it would be the end of the pleasant state he was in. And he would protest, "I don't want to die. I understand it here and feel secure. I want to stay." What to us is birth, to him is death, and he resists it. But the day comes when he does die to that life and is born into our world. What happens to him? He is cradled in loving arms. Coft hands hold him gently. A "kind face" looks down at him, and he loves that face. Everybody that comes near loves him. He is the "king of the world he surveys." Here he begins to grow, and he finds life good. Eh, he has some struggles and hardships, but he loves God and people love him. And he loves this world with its seasons, its beauty, and its human companionship. Finally he gets to be an old man and he is told, "You have to die." He protests, "I don't want to die. I love this world. I like to feel the sun on my face, and the cool rain. I like our dear, human ways. I love the faces of my wife and children. I've lived here a long time. I don't want to die." But he does die to this world and is born into the next. Now can you believe that all of a sudden the character of God and the constitution of the universe are going to be changed so that person will be born into a place of gloom and terror, or will be left in a state of nothingness? That is preposterous: He will awaken to find himself young again. Loving faces will greet him. Loving hands will touch him. More beautiful sunlight will surround him. Sweeter music will sound in his ears. All tears will be wiped from his eyes, and he will say, "Why was I so afraid of this thing called death, when, as I now know, it is life?" So much depends on your point of view: You can think of death as a dark door, or a dark valley. Or you can think of it as a rainbow bridge stretching between two marvelous worlds, a bridge which all our departed loved ones have crossed and which we too will cross one day to be reunited with them.

But this birth into a life with God carries with it a price. God teaches us the requirements to entering this life in his word. Here (He did on the day of Pentecost, we have to turn from our previous ways of acting and thinking and live life with a new attitude. He founded in the ways and teachings of Jesus the Christ. To do this, we must first study and learn his ways. We must not allow our own mistakes and shortcomings to sap hope from us, rather use them to recognize our need for a savior. And then accept Jesus as that savior. The study of God's word will result in our belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. For faith comes from hearing the word of God. Once we believe, and declare that belief, we are then submerged in the waters of baptism, to arise to this new life. He that provides us access to eternal life with God.

One of the commands that Jesus gave us is that we love one another. We do this by encouraging each other and by building one another up. (Perhaps you need some encouragement in your life. (Perhaps some things have happened or been said or have taken a turn you find difficult to deal with on your own. We stand ready to encourage you. (Perhaps you require study or prayers to strengthen your faith. We stand ready to work with you. (Perhaps you have physical, financial, or other needs. We stand ready to help. This is a convenient time we set aside for such requests. If coming before the congregation is something you are not prepared to do, then catch one of us after services. Our request will get to the right place and your needs taken care of. (Please accept the Lord's invitation while we stand and sing.