

## **“Is the Alternative Really Worse?”**

***“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” (Romans 8:18, ESV)***

You may have heard someone say: “It’s better than the alternative.” Maybe you have said this yourself. And the “alternative” often being referred to is death. But is this true? Is death the worst alternative?

Well, as is sometimes the case, context matters. For example, someone living daily with excruciating physical pain or with deep and seemingly incurable mental anguish may feel that not living could be better than living in great suffering (hopefully with the understanding, though, that one’s difficult circumstances can never justify suicide). But regardless of how individuals personally evaluate life versus death, Scripture also tells us that context does matter when it comes to considering whether the circumstances we are experiencing in this world are better than bodily death.

See, for someone who isn’t in Christ (i.e. someone who hasn’t been converted and therefore hasn’t received the forgiveness and new life that Jesus has earned for the world), death means facing God’s judgment. And that is a horror that none of us fully understands in this life. For in this world, ***“[your Father who is in heaven] makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45, Modern English Version)***. Though ***“condemned already” (John 3:18, ESV)***, the unbeliever does not experience the fullness of God’s judgment on this side of heaven. So, for the lost unbeliever, bodily death (and the judgment which follows) certainly is a worse alternative than living in this world – no matter how bad one’s earthly circumstances.

For the Christian, on the other hand, the Apostle Paul tell us ***“that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*** Neither could any worldly happiness or prosperity or accomplishment ever compare to the great joy of living with Christ in Heaven. As St. Paul, quoting from Isaiah the prophet, wrote to the Corinthians: ***“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9, Modern English Version)***. See, not only is Jesus’ selfless love and His amazing plan of salvation beyond our ability to fully comprehend and grasp, but so is the everlasting resurrection life in Heaven which He has waiting for His church.

My friends, God’s Son Jesus Christ bore our sins, suffered our Hell, and died our death on the cross. He has reconciled us to God by the voluntary sacrifice of His own life (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). And His resurrection three days later proves that our heavenly Father has accepted Jesus’ sacrifice. Jesus has taken away our sins. He has overcome Satan. He has restored our relationship with our Creator. And Jesus of course has defeated the power of the grave.

See, our crucified and risen Lord has shown us that bodily death is not the worst alternative. For this final enemy has been defeated by Jesus. And those baptized into Him now possess everlasting life through faith in Him. But this doesn’t mean that our lives in this world should be treated with contempt. To the contrary. Our lives belong to God. ***“Or do you not know that your body is a***

***temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, ESV).***

Therefore, we try to be good stewards of all that God gives us in this life – including the gift of our bodies. And we recognize that our earthly lives have meaning because God gave us life and has placed us into vocations/callings to serve those around us in this world. So, we ought never treat our lives in this world with loathing. For life is a gift from God. Yet, we look forward to the full experience of the new life in Christ which our Lord gave us in Holy Baptism. This is our hope each day as we journey on this side of heaven, and it is a special comfort to us when our lives in this world are filled with trouble, want, suffering, and pain.

My fellow Christian, eternal life with God in glory *is* a better alternative for you and me than life in this world. Sadly, though, what is true for us isn't true for everybody. For by their own confession, literally billions of people living in this world right now do not have faith in Jesus Christ. They are living in God's judgment. They lack any real hope of a better “alternative” when they leave this world. Therefore, let us tell others about Jesus while we still have breath in our lungs in this life. The opportunities to do so often are more than we sometimes even realize. Perhaps one opportunity to start a conversation about Jesus would be to respond to the phrase, “It's better than the alternative.” For the next time someone says these words to you when speaking about bodily death, by God's grace, you can confidently tell the person making this comment that you are looking forward to the resurrection life which awaits in God's Kingdom of Glory because Jesus has won for you (and for all people) everlasting life in paradise. And there could be no better alternative.

In Christ our Risen and Living Lord,  
Pastor

PS – Just a reminder, we wind down our celebration of Easter this month (with the final Sunday of Easter being May 12<sup>th</sup>). Remember to mark Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> on your calendar because we will be celebrating the Ascension of our Lord that evening at St. John's (Hubbell) with a joint worship service starting at 7PM. On Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup> we'll be celebrating the Day of Pentecost, and the week after (Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup>) will be Trinity Sunday. There are plenty of feasts to celebrate in May as we close out the first half of our church year. How exciting! See you in church  
~ Pastor.