

Cherish the Life

11/16/2025

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Yesterday, our church gathered to celebrate the life of Pastor George. It was a tender and meaningful service—a time of grief, but also of gratitude. Many of you were there, and you felt what I did: the presence of love in the stories told, in the laughter through tears, and in the quiet prayers as we remembered a beloved pastor and friend.

After the service, I spoke with Rev. Oden Warman, who conducted the funeral. He said something that has stayed with me: “I’ve conducted many funerals, but the service for someone who lived a beautiful life is richer and easier to lead.” That’s true, isn’t it? When someone has cherished the life God gave them—when they’ve loved deeply, served faithfully, and lived purposefully—their very life becomes a sermon.

Last Sunday, we explored a powerful theme, *The Wonder of Life*—how every life, created by God, is filled with mystery, beauty, and sacred purpose. That message still echoes with us this week as we remember Pastor George’s life and as we turn our hearts toward today’s call to cherish the life God has given. If last week was about marveling at the gift itself, this week is about how we live in response to that gift—how we hold it dear, protect it, and nurture it through our daily faithfulness.

That’s what today’s message is about: Cherish the Life.

We’ve already prepared our hearts by singing two hymns that perfectly frame the message. We just sang, “I will cherish the old rugged cross,” and then, “Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.” Those two declarations tell the whole story of faith.

To cherish something means to hold it close, to treat it as sacred, to love it with a deep tenderness. So when we say we cherish the cross, we aren’t admiring the wood or the nails. We’re cherishing what was accomplished there—the gift of forgiveness, the victory of love, the triumph of life over death.

And “Because He lives, I can face tomorrow” is the direct result of that cherishing. Because Christ’s life conquered death, our tomorrows are secure. The cross gave us life; the risen Christ invites us to cherish it.

That's what Scripture calls us to today—to rediscover the joy, the purpose, and the sacred responsibility of cherishing the life we've been given.

If you know the book of Isaiah, you know that most of it is filled with warnings and laments. But chapter 12 bursts forth like a song after the storm—a hymn of thanksgiving rising from a weary people who have seen salvation.

It begins, “*Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation*” (v. 2).

This isn't just a personal relief—it's a communal shout of joy. The people who once feared for their lives now declare their confidence in God. They have learned that salvation is not only deliverance from danger but also restoration to joy.

Isaiah paints two vivid pictures to help us see what cherishing that salvation looks like.

First, he says, “*With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation*” (v. 3). Picture that image—a deep, life-giving well. You can almost hear the splash and feel the coolness of the water on a hot day. That's what God's grace is like. It doesn't dry up when life gets hard; it keeps flowing.

To cherish the life God has given us is to drink deeply from that well—to return to God's goodness again and again, especially when our souls feel parched. In prayer, in Scripture, in community, we draw water from the well and discover again that, because He lives, we can face tomorrow.

The second image Isaiah gives is one of proclamation. “*Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations*” (v. 4). Gratitude, when it's real, cannot stay private. A heart that knows grace overflows in thanksgiving. The cherished life is not something we hide under our own comfort; it's something we proclaim with joy.

When we truly cherish what God has done, others can see it. It shows in the way we speak, in the gratitude we express, and in the peace that steadies us through trials.

That's what Pastor George modeled so beautifully. Through all his years of ministry—through every baptism, visit, and sermon—he lived this passage.

His life was a song of joy drawn from the deep wells of salvation. Even in his later years, when strength waned, his spirit was filled with trust in the One who had become his salvation.

To cherish the life God gives is to live in that trust—to wake each morning with Isaiah’s words on our lips: I will trust and not be afraid, for God is my strength and my song.

While Isaiah calls us to rejoice in receiving life, Paul calls us to stewardship in living it.

The Thessalonian church faced a difficult challenge. Some believers had misunderstood the promise of Christ’s return. They thought, “If Jesus is coming soon, why should we keep working?” So they stopped contributing, relying on others to sustain them.

Paul addresses this directly and firmly: “*Anyone unwilling to work should not eat*” (v. 10). But his rebuke isn’t harshness—it’s pastoral care. He knows that idleness, in both spirit and action, erodes dignity and disrupts community.

Paul’s own example was one of dedication. He worked night and day, making tents, sharing the gospel without burdening others. His message is clear: Cherishing the life God gives means living it purposefully and productively.

To cherish life is to use it well—to see every day as a sacred opportunity to serve, to build, to bless, to love.

Paul identifies three dimensions of this stewardship:

1. Purpose. Our lives are not waiting rooms for heaven. Each day is a workshop for Christ. Even small acts—a word of encouragement, a shared meal, a prayer for a neighbor—carry eternal weight. Every purpose-driven moment says, “Because He lives, my time matters.”
2. Community. Paul reminds us that life in Christ is interdependent. One person’s idleness can become another’s burden. But when everyone contributes according to their calling—whether through labor, love, or prayer—the body of Christ flourishes. A cherished life strengthens the whole community.

3. Order. Paul says, “*Do your work quietly and earn your own living*” (v. 12).

He’s not merely talking about employment; he’s describing an inner peace. A cherished life resists chaos. It finds joy in rhythm, quiet dedication, and faithfulness that doesn’t seek attention.

Cherishing our lives means honoring both joy and responsibility. It means tending the garden God has entrusted us with—our homes, our church, our relationships—so that they bear good fruit.

Many of you have done this faithfully for decades. You’ve served on committees, led Sunday School, cared for sick friends, prayed quietly for others. Though the world may not see those moments, God does. Every small act of faithfulness is a way of saying, “Thank you for this life, Lord. I cherish it.”

Cherishing the cross and cherishing the life are not two separate tasks; they are one holy rhythm. The cross is the foundation; the life is the flower that grows from it.

The cross tells us what our lives are worth: “This life is so cherished by God that Christ gave everything for it.” The cherished life answers: “God, I will live each day in response to that love.”

We cherish the cross by remembering its sacrifice. We cherish the life by living its resurrection. When we live with gratitude, when we serve without complaint, when we trust through difficult tomorrows, we show the world that Christ lives—indeed, lives in us.

That’s why the hymn we sang earlier still rings so true: “Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.” Those words are Isaiah 12 and 2 Thessalonians 3 put to music. Because He lives, we draw water with joy from salvation’s well. Because He lives, we get up each morning to love and serve with faithful hands. Because He lives, fear loses its grip, and purpose fills its place.

As we leave this place, may we hold both songs in our hearts—the old rugged cross and the assurance that because He lives, we can face tomorrow.

Let us go forth cherishing the life God has given: drinking deeply from the wells of salvation, living responsibly and gratefully, and sharing the joy that comes from knowing our Redeemer lives. Amen.