

Copyright Geist Christian Church, November 5, 2023

**Series:** Life (and Death)

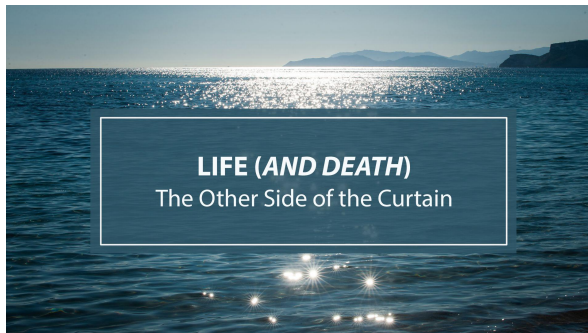
**Title:** The Other Side of the Curtain

**Preaching:** Danny Gulden, Lead Pastor, Promise Road Campus

**Text:** [Revelation 7:9-17](#)

**Email:** [Danny Gulden](#)

[Watch Service](#)



Living God, in whom there is no shadow or change,  
we thank you for the gift of life eternal,  
and for all those who, having served you well,  
now rest from their labors.

We thank you for all the saints remembered and forgotten,  
for those dear souls most precious to us.

Today we give thanks for those Geist Christian Church members who during the last twelve months  
have died and entered into glory:

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*Steve Smith—November 11, 2022*

*Mike Jackson—September 20, 2023*

*Ray Sturm—December 14, 2022*

*Mildred Thompson—October 19, 2023*

*Sandy Burns—July 21, 2023*

*Carolyn Hetzler – October 29, 2023*

*Nance Bower—August 8, 2023*

*John Hall—October 31, 2023*

*Lida Harrison—August 30, 2023*

*Margaret “Peg” Schneider—October 31, 202*

*Lou Ann Kjoson—August 30, 2023*

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We bless you for their life and love,  
and rejoice for them “all is well,  
and all manner of things will be well.”

Our world is torn by violence and terror, most especially in Israel and Gaza. In the midst of war, so many innocent people suffer. People of the Jewish and Muslim faith around the world are living in fear. We pray especially those who have died; those who are grieving; the injured; and those now without food, shelter or medical supplies. Strengthen and support the work of all relief organizations. We pray for your peace and reconciliation to overcome conflict. We ask that you give wisdom and discernment to our global leaders and those in positions of power who have the ability to impact the course of this war. Help us to be bold advocates and agents of peace in our own communion

We also pray for healing for Esther, Bob, Mei Ling, Carl, and Karen

May we know we are to be your saints, neither by our own choosing nor in our own strength, but simply by the call of Christ Jesus our Savior.

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

We are starting a new four week series today that I believe to be an important series. It's called *Life (and Death)*. Death is something that we all will have to deal with at some point. The death of a parent, a relative, a child, a close friend, and ourselves. Perhaps some of us have already dealt with death in ways too numerous to count and too painful to bring up.

The Christian faith has a word about death, about life beyond death, about Life before death. But death is not something we really like to think about until we absolutely have to. I think we want to know why over the years books such as *Heaven is Real* and *The Shack* have been bestsellers. So my prayer is that over the next four weeks, you will hear some good news, a word of hope, a word of hope about life eternal, a word of hope about life here and now.

In the church universal, November 1 has long been thought of as All Saints Day, recognized in Christian worship on the first Sunday in November. It's a recognition of the spiritual bond between those who are on earth and those who are in heaven. In some cultures, such as Mexico and Guatemala, it is a multiple day celebration with food and the like. In the early church, it was also an occasion to celebrate those who had passed on who had led one to Jesus. It is a day to remember those in our lives who have come before us, those who we say are with God, in heaven.

The book of Revelation is a complicated book. It's hard to get a verse out of it that would sound good on the side of a coffee mug. It's a misunderstood book. It's been understood to be a roadmap for the return of Jesus and the end of the world. You've probably seen those folks who like to occasionally come around and tell us the signs of the world are pointing to Jesus' return on this date.

I want to be clear. It's not that kind of book. It's not a map to the end. Rather, it's for those who feel as if they are at the end. It's a reminder that a new beginning awaits, that when things seem hopeless, God moves into the neighborhood.

As strange as it sounds, Revelation is more concerned with us, with those on this side of the curtain. It's less about death, and more about life.

The words of Revelation were composed by someone named John of Patmos, not the John of the Gospels, not the John who wrote the letters of John, but one who has been exiled by the church. John pictures a great crowd, a large crowd of people, a diverse crowd, and they are holding palm branches, wearing white robes, standing before the throne:

Then one of the elders said to me, "Who are these people wearing white robes, and where did they come from?"

I said to him, "Sir, you know."

Then he said to me, "These people have come out of great hardship. They have washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb's blood. This is the reason they are before God's throne. They worship him day and night in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them. They won't hunger or thirst anymore. No sun or scorching heat will beat down on them, because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them. He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 7:13-17 CEB)

These words give us hope for those whom we have lost to death. For those in white and those in the everlasting presence of God. But do they give you hope for yourself? Hope for those you know who are struggling? Hope for a world that seems to be torn apart by its very fabric?

Do you today need to hear a promise, not only for life beyond death but for life today?

David Lose says, "Promises are amazing in that they don't just *describe* things, they have the capacity actually to *create* the reality they name." When we feel stuck, whether by grief, or our past, or by anything, it can be hard to imagine a future. But here we hear the promise of Christ, not just for life beyond but for this life.

God will lead you to springs of life-giving water. God will wipe away every tear from your eyes. It also gives us a chance to evaluate our lives now. For through the cross, we have the promise of life, the promise of Christ that we may each fully live. As you think about those saints in the church and in your own lives, how did they live?

Arthur Brooks tells a story about a man on a plane. He was on a late-night flight from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. The plane was dark and quiet and most people were either sleeping or watching a movie. In the row in front of him, a husband and wife were talking and he heard the wife say, "It's not true that no one needs you anymore," and then he would hear the husband say, "It would be better off if I was dead." And his wife kept saying, "Quit saying that."

Arthur Brooks could hear them but not see them, so he formed an image in his head of someone who worked all his life in obscurity, disappointed at dreams unfulfilled. He imagined him forced to retire, tossed aside. And he just kept saying, "It would be better if I were dead."

The plane touched down, the lights switched on and Arthur Brooks stood up to get a look at this man. He was shocked. He recognized him. Well-known, famous, even in his mid-eighties and from the outside, deeply admired. Other people recognized him.

He said this encounter changed his life forever. Who was the real person? The one who everyone recognized and admired from afar or the one who kept telling his wife that he would be better off dead?

Kieran Seita, a professor of philosophy at MIT, reminds us that the ancient Greeks believed there are two kinds of activities in our lives: 1). Telic activities, which are goals with endpoints. 2). Atelic activities, which are ongoing endeavors with no definitive endpoint

Some examples of Telic activities are mowing the lawn, painting a house, bathing a cat, getting a promotion at work. In other words, once you are finished with it, you are finished.

Atelic are activities where we find meaning and purpose. Examples include spending time with loved ones, parenting, praying, spending time with friends, feeding the hungry at a shelter, going for a walk, being generous. Atelic activities have no end. You can't go and feed people and then say, "Well, I have solved world hunger."

Now Telic activities are important; they make the world go around. But Atelic activities are what make a life.

One of the privileges of being a pastor is officiating funerals. As the faithful cross over from this life to the next, to eternal life with God, I've never heard anyone say at a funeral, "Jimmy was great; he always mowed his lawn. What a legacy." Or, "Becky, wow, she returned email quicker than anyone I have ever met."

According to Paul Tillich, the thing people fear the most is not death, but it's the fear of an empty or meaningless life.

Here are the Top 5 Regrets of the Dying:

- 1) "I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me."
- 2) "I wish I hadn't worked so hard."
- 3) "I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings."
- 4) "I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends."
- 5) "I wish I had let myself be happier."

On the other side of the curtain, God, through Jesus Christ, will indeed wipe away every tear. That is Good News. But that's not all. On this side of the curtain, God, through Jesus Christ, promises us that we may know the fullness of life.

So today we give thanks for those who have shaped us into the people we are, those who have loved us and failed us and everything in between. We celebrate those who have called us to a life of hope.

And we give thanks that death and pain do not have the final word.

Let us pray.