

Jesus: the over comer of death

1. Intro / Context

- Ernest Hemingway famously said “live life to the fullest”
- And whether people express it or not, this would be the mantra many in our culture today would live their life by
- Living life to the fullest is going to vary from person to person
- For some people that might mean travelling
 - Whether that’s back packing around Europe or motorhoming around NZ
- For others its experiencing as many thrills in life as possible
 - When we were in NZ, it seemed Queenstown is the place to go to do that
 - Full of young backpackers from Australia, UK, Europe
 - They are experiencing everything
 - Skiing, jet boat rides, white water rafting, sky diving, bungy jumping, paragliding, mountain biking, glacier hiking
- For others life to the fullest is about experiencing the finer things of life
 - Fine dining, nice wines, massages, pamper sessions
- Our advertisers tells us to buy their product so we can live life to the max

- We want to live life to the full
 - And why not?!
 - God gave us this wonderful world to take care of and enjoy
 - We ought to take pleasure in the good things this world and this life offer

- However, if say “living life to the fullest” is only about travel, adventure and fine dining ... then not only are we limiting the “full life” that God is offering us ... we will inevitably be disappointed and sometimes devastated when it all goes wrong
 - Two days after we did a jet boat ride, a jet boat from another company hit a sand bank in the river and flipped, throwing a group of Chinese tourists out of the boat, injury many and killing one
 - We visited the steepest street in the world is in Dunedin, NZ where they hold a Jaffa race each year > 35% gradient
 - A number of years ago some students from Dunedin University were looking for some thrills, decided to hop in a wheelie bin and ride it to the bottom
 - They hit a parked trailer on the way down and one of them died

- Two years ago Michael Schumacher (F1 driver) hit his head skiing and is unlikely to ever recover
- We all want to 'live life the fullest'
 - And even if we do live a good life and a long life ... eventually it comes to an end
 - Death catches up with all of us
- Surely there must be more to life, than trying to squeeze as much as you can into whatever time you have on this earth ... all the while never knowing if you will get 90 years to experience it or 50 years.
- As we look at this passage this morning we see there is
 - Because what we see is that Jesus is the one who
 - Not only overcomes death and
 - But gives life to the full to all who believe
 - Jesus gives life and he able to do it because he deals with the problem of death

2. Death comes to all: Jesus has the power over death

- See in v43 Jesus is on the move again
 - He leaves Samaria where he met the woman by the well and makes his way to Galilee in the north where he is from
- News that Jesus was back in town obviously spread quickly, because no sooner had Jesus arrived we're told an official from the royal court in Capernaum who son was dying legged it over 20km to see Jesus
- When he gets to Jesus he begs Jesus to come and see his son so that he might heal him
 - Early in Jesus ministry, Capernaum had been the site where Jesus has performed various healings
 - Mark 1:21, 30-34 > Peter's mother in law & large crowds
 - So Jesus had a reputation among the ppl of that region for healing the sick
 - So Jesus had runs on the board when it came to doing this stuff ... and in his desperation, the official went to Jesus so that his son might be saved
- **Implication**
- You can totally understand the man's desperation for his son

- What parent wouldn't do all they could to ensure their child survived an illness
- If your child was dying and you knew there was a chance they could live if you could walk to a specialist at Martin Place ... you're be out the door and off
- And the official is desperate because we're told in v47 that his son is close to death
 - He'd consulted the doctors,
 - taken him to the Children's Hospital,
 - given him all the medication he'd been prescribed ...
 - but it wasn't working and he's knocking on death's door
- Last weekend Liana went to Perth to visit her grandmother who just turned 98
 - She's still in fine form, playing bridge, doing crosswords, going out
 - Only 2 years off getting a letter from the Queen!
- But the reason Liana went to visit her is because she knows that she may not see her again
 - Her life is drawing to its inevitable end
- Whether it's a 98yo grandmother, or a young child ... death is an unavoidable deadline we all will meet
 - There is no escape clause in the contract of life
 - There is no indefinite pause button for life that you and I can push
 - Death is inevitable > disease and decay are certain
 - You only have to have a close look in the mirror to see the reality of that for yourself
 - For some
 - Hairline receding > others the hair has just vanished!
 - If you still have hair > are there not some grey hairs are starting to sprout / take over?
 - You'll see worry lines in forehead > smile lines around the eyes
 - Bits of our bodies that are sagging and extending that weren't 10-20 yrs ago
- Disease death and decay are inevitable for all of us
- When disease comes to call on the family of this official ... he wasn't able to keep death at bay for his son
 - He was utterly powerless to anything about it

- Because the reality is that death comes to all of us ... no matter how much access to medical care, insurance, servants, wealth we might have
- We cannot keep it at bay

- That might be pretty raw for many of us
 - Those of you who have aging parents or already lost parents
 - Suffered still birth of a baby
 - Death of a close friend
- Death is an unavoidable reality that we all have to face and when it comes to call at our family home, it doesn't matter how many precautions we have taken ... we cannot avoid it
- It's one of the tragic consequences of living in a broken world

- As confronting as this reality is, the Bible is not afraid to face this reality and tell it how it is
 - The Bible is much more willing to do this than we are in our culture today
- Our culture is afraid of death
- We try and avoid the reality of it
 - We put old people in nursing homes
 - We have plastic surgery and implants and hair transplants and use make up to cover up or hide the effects of our aging ... and that's just the guys

- But the Bible talks about this reality and has no need to hide in fear or despair from it
- Why? Because Jesus has overcome it
 - Jesus has defeated death
 - He has the power over death
 - He is the one who can save us from the inevitable destination of the grave
- And that is clearly demonstrated with what happens in the second half of this story

- After the official pleads with Jesus to come and heal his son, Jesus sends the man away saying "you may go, your son will live"
- And so off the man goes and on the way home his servants meet him on the road with the wonderful news that his son is alive
 - And when he asks them at what point did he get well, he realises it was the same time that Jesus had told him his son will live

- Jesus healed the boy
 - He miraculously brings this boy from certain death to life
- The one thing you and I cannot avoid and have no power to overcome - death ... Jesus does with four words "Your son will live"
 - I can't even make a sandwich with four words > wouldn't matter how many words!
 - Jesus spoke ... and through his words he brought life
- This miracle is a wonderful summary of the whole purpose of Jesus coming to earth as a man
- He came to bring life!
 - **John 1:4** - In him was life, and that life was the light of men
 - **John 6:35** I am the bread of life
 - **John 10:10** I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
- Jesus comes to bring life
 - And the healing of the boy, bringing him from death to life ... is a sign pointing us to his power over death and the life he brings to all
- One of our big fears in life is death
 - But Jesus **has** overcome it
 - In him we have nothing to fear
 - He has the power over death
 - He overcame it himself and he will do it for all who believe in him
- That doesn't mean you can eat maccas for breakfast lunch and dinner and smoke a pack of ciggies a day and not worry about the consequences
 - But it does mean we can face death of a loved one or our own death and know it is not the end > but merely the beginning of life in God's new creation where there will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain
- When you know this life is not the end ... it gives you wonderful freedom
 - You're no longer scrambling to make the most of every moment this world has to offer
 - You don't have to feel like you have to cram all your pleasure, joy and happiness into the 80-odd years you have on this earth
 - You don't have to stress about earning the money you need to
 - take the kids to Disneyland, or
 - go on that cruise, or
 - buy that new car or

- move you way up in the property market
- Because life for eternity awaits you
 - And it will be so much better than what you can experience or imagine
- However overcoming death and bringing life is much more than life beyond the grave
 - The full life that Jesus brings starts now
 - It's not just an abundant **quantity** of life you receive in Christ ... but it also an abundant **quality** of life that comes in Christ
 - You see the life that Jesus brings is not just resurrection life ... but Jesus tells us it's
 - life to the full
 - life as it is meant to be
 - life that has a sure and certain hope for the future ... even in the midst of despair
 - life that has direction, meaning and purpose ... even in the midst of chaos
 - life that brings joy ... even in the midst of sadness
- So often we go looking for life and meaning and purpose and we search and look anywhere and everywhere to find it and ultimately we are left disappointed and in despair because death ruins it or cuts it short
 - Jesus shows us life to the full is truly found him
 - He has the power over death, he has conquered death, and he has the power to give us life

3. Life comes to those who believe: Jesus words are trustworthy & true

- So we see Jesus is the one who overcomes death and gives life
 - But how do you receive that?
 - How do you get the life that Jesus offers?
 - It comes by faith > it comes by believing in Jesus
- Belief / faith / trust in Jesus is the other big theme running through these verses
 - In fact's a key theme for the whole of John's gospel
- Many people today would argue that to be a Christian you just need to have faith
 - Often Christian faith is portrayed in a couple of ways

- When it comes to faith there are many say Christians faith is a 'blind faith'
 - That is, to be a Christian, you suspend your rational and intellectual faculties and you believe just because
- Ricky Gervais – actor, comedian > famous for TV show 'The Office' says
 - *"We shouldn't even need the word atheism. If people didn't invent ridiculous imaginary gods, rational people wouldn't have to deny them"*
- You see when it comes to faith in God, many are skeptical
 - They can't see God, so they think he's imaginary and Christians are weird
- Often those who are skeptical will say
 - "Well if God revealed himself to me, then I would believe"
 - "If Jesus turned up and did some miracle ... like turned this water into a Penfold's Grange ... then I'd believe"
- This was the mindset of the Galileans
- When the royal official comes to see Jesus to ask him to save his son, Jesus says
 - **John 4:48** - *"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."*
- Now on the face of it, this mindset of the Galileans seems completely logical
 - The Galileans approach seems rational
 - Why believe in something you can't see?
 - Seeing is believing – right?!
 - It's illogical or irrational to believe in something you cannot see!
- But the Galileans weren't really interested in Jesus
 - They were only interested in the show
 - They just love Jesus for his party tricks
 - They're not interested in the message that Jesus has come to bring about how they can have life in his name
 - They're just interested in what he can do for them
- And Jesus rebukes this type of faith that's only concerned with the spectacular and the miraculous

- Reason for this is because Jesus miracles are not the reason he came into this world
 - The signs / his miracles are to point us to him as the Christ (God's promised saviour) and therefore listen to and believe what he has to say
 - The miracles (like turning water in to wine and healing the officials son) are like big sign posts on the freeway saying ...
 - This way! > Look! > Pay attention! to me and the message I have come proclaim
- The wonderful contrast to the faith of the Galileans is that of the royal official
 - Because we see in v50 when Jesus says "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed.
 - That last phrase literally says ... "The man **believed** what Jesus said to him and departed"
- He didn't demand Jesus show a sign,
 - He didn't say "No, no Jesus, you can't stay here, you must come to him"
 - He didn't say "How will I know he will be saved?"
- He heard the words of Jesus and believed
- **Application**
- Now you might say ...
 - "Ahh hah! ... that's just blind faith"
 - "He just 'blindly' believed Jesus and off he went"
- No it wasn't
 - It was far from blind faith for this royal official
 - He would have heard about the many miraculous healings in Capernaum (where the official was from) that Jesus had done previously
 - No doubt he had got wind of what Jesus had done in Jerusalem too
 - So there was a logical rationale for believing that Jesus could and would meet his need and save his son
 - It wasn't a blind faith ... it was a faith that trusted in the words of one who could be trusted
- So for the royal official ... his belief in Jesus was somewhat of a journey
 - He didn't check his brain out at the door
 - It was a series of steps of rational thinking
- First ... he heard something about Jesus

- He'd heard about other healings > heard about other miracles > realised there was something to Jesus that warranted going to Jesus to meet him
- Secondly, he goes to Jesus with his need
 - His son is dying > he's desperately in need of saving
 - So he goes to Jesus with his need
- Thirdly, he trusted Jesus word
 - Jesus has demonstrated his power > he's proven his track record
 - So when he tells the man his son will live > he trusts the word of Jesus
- Lastly, his faith was strengthened as his request was answered
 - When the official finds out his son had been healed the same time that Jesus and said it would happen ... he believes > it was a growing faith
- This type of faith is the faith that Jesus commends
 - The man came to Jesus with a great need, trusting that Jesus could fulfill it
 - When Jesus said he would overcome it, the man went away trusting in Jesus, believing in him and his words and his power to do so
- Unlike the Galileans
 - They didn't see Jesus as their saviour
 - They just saw Jesus as an entertainer
- **Application**
- This passage challenges those who demand signs from God before they will believe
 - Jesus has given us plenty of signs and miracles to confirm his credentials
 - Healings, water into wine, raising Lazarus from the dead, feeding 5,000
 - What more could you want?
 - Jesus did give you more
 - He went to the cross to die for you to show you for real how much he loves you
 - He rose from the grave to show you he really does have power over death to save you
- So if you're a person wanting more signs ... look at what Jesus has already done

- But more importantly, see how they are signs that point to something
 - The whole point of the signs is to point to Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and by believing in him you too can have life to the full

- Secondly, like the man, when we come to Jesus in faith ... it's faith that he can do something
 - It's not just believing he existed
 - It's not just trusting he is the Christ
 - It's coming to him, like the man with a need that Jesus can resolve
- Our great need is that we too are facing death
 - Death in this world and death for eternity
 - We desperately need saving
 - When we come to Jesus we are trusting / believing that because of the cross, he can save us from it

- Just as the official's faith was growing faith ... so too will yours
- For it's not the size of your faith that matters, but what you have your faith in
 - I could have all the faith in the world that
 - I'm going to qualify for the Rio Olympics next year
 - But that faith is useless
 - I could have all the faith in the world that Sally Pearson will qualify for the 100m hurdles ... and that's a much more reasonable proposition
 - You see ... it depends who or what you have your faith in
- When you faith is in Jesus as the one who overcomes death and gives life
 - It doesn't matter that how big or little your faith is
 - What matters is whether you trust him and his words to give you the life he promises

- Friends ... we have a desperate need ...
 - We desperately want to live life to the full
 - But we know death, disease and decay will undermine our ability to do that
- But there is one who overcomes death and gives life to the full to those who believe
 - Like the official ... we've all heard about Jesus
 - Will you focus on the signs and demand to see more?
 - Or will you focus on what the signs point to?
- Because when you see what the signs are pointing to ...

- They are showing you someone who is the Christ and who's words can be trusted
- And when he promises you life to the full ... you know you don't need to exhaust yourself trying to live life to the max
- You have it already in him

PRAY