

THE *Certainty* OF  
God's Promises



# Welcome!

A warm welcome to each one of you this morning! I am glad you decided to join me as we consider a third promise which God has made to us. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we are presented with a sobering truth that life is short - that our days are numbered. Jesus uses a metaphor to describe that moment when our work on earth is done:

***Night Is Coming***



# Why This Promise at This Time?

I agree that it doesn't seem to fall into the same category as the first two promises we considered in Part 1 ("All things work together for good to those who love God") and Part 2 ("I will be with you"). These are the kind of promises that lift us up and encourage us, especially during the difficult, painful seasons of life.

At this moment in history, during a global pandemic, I thought it might be helpful to consider a promise which the Lord made to His disciples after they had encountered a grown man who had been blind since birth. Granted, it is promise we may desire to avoid, but it is ultimately one which you will want to consider. First, it is an inescapable promise. Second, it can actually transform the way you live your life each day.



# Euphemisms

In our culture today, it is readily apparent that we prefer to use euphemisms to describe unpleasant thoughts or experiences, even though, as the OED maintains, “the harsher or more offensive expressions would more precisely designate what is intended.” This gentler substitution of words softens the unpleasant reality and offers an alternative to a distasteful description. Rather than using “genocide,” for example, media outlets may prefer “ethnic cleansing.” And since “all cultures,” as Professor John Frame notes, “are hesitant to speak of death directly, so we today say that someone has ‘passed away.’” To avoid tension when the word death is meant, one might even prefer colloquial over formal speech: “He kicked the bucket.”



# Blaise Pascal

1623-1662

“Being unable to cure death,  
wretchedness and ignorance, men have  
decided, in order to be happy, not to  
think about such things.”

- Pensées



# *Night* As a Euphemism for *Death*

- Jesus used the word *night* to represent death. The Greek word for *night* can be used literally or figuratively. Most commonly, it means “the time when there is no sunlight; darkness.” When used figuratively, it is **a symbol of death**, or as **the time for rest from work**. Affirming this same idea, scholar Gerhard Kittel writes, “On the lips of Jesus it means the time when **there is no possibility of work. This time comes with death.**”
- Death was introduced by God to Adam in the Garden of Eden: “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it **you shall surely die**” (Gen. 2:16-17).



# Death is the Penalty for Sin

- After Adam and Eve took and ate the forbidden fruit, God said to Adam, “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, **till** you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). “Estrangement from God was the death of Adam’s soul” (Calvin).
- “The conjunction ‘till’ is not simply chronological, as though the words could mean: ‘You will have to endure hard labor up till the moment of death.’ The force is climactic: ‘Your hard labor will finally slay you.’ In man’s struggle with the soil, the soil will conquer and claim him” (Vos).





Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel



# Death Is the Penalty for Sin

- “For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead” (I Cor. 15:21).
- “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).
- “Sin when it is fully grown brings forth death” (James 1:15).
- “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Cor. 15:22).
- “All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return” (Eccl. 3:20).



“The last act is bloody, however fine the rest of the play. They throw dirt over your head and it is finished forever.”

- Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*

A close-up photograph of a fountain pen with a dark nib and a gold-colored barrel, resting on a document. The document has the words 'LAST WILL' in large, bold, serif capital letters, and 'AND TESTAMENT' in smaller, bold, serif capital letters below it. The background is a warm, yellowish-brown color.

# LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

In Jesus' promise before us, He recognizes our natural fear of death and uses the euphemism *night* to indicate that there will come a time in everyone's life when all human activity will come to an end. The writer's pen will lay motionless on her antique desk; the architect's last design will be turned over to the construction foreman; the artist's half-finished canvas will be discovered on a well-used easel; the attorney will never again stand in front of a judge; and the university professor has tutored her last student.

# *Night* Extinguishes the Light

*“The night comes, it will come certainly, may come suddenly, is coming nearer and nearer. We cannot compute how high our sun is. It may go down at noon. Nor can we promise ourselves a twilight between the day of life and the night of death. When the night comes we cannot work, because the light afforded us to work by is extinguished. The grave is a land of darkness, and our work cannot be done in the dark. And, besides, our time allotted us for our work will then have expired. When our Master tied us to duty, he tied us to time, too”* (Matthew Henry).





# Measured Living

- “The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away....So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90:10,12).
- “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’ – yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that’” (James 4:13-15).



# Measured Living



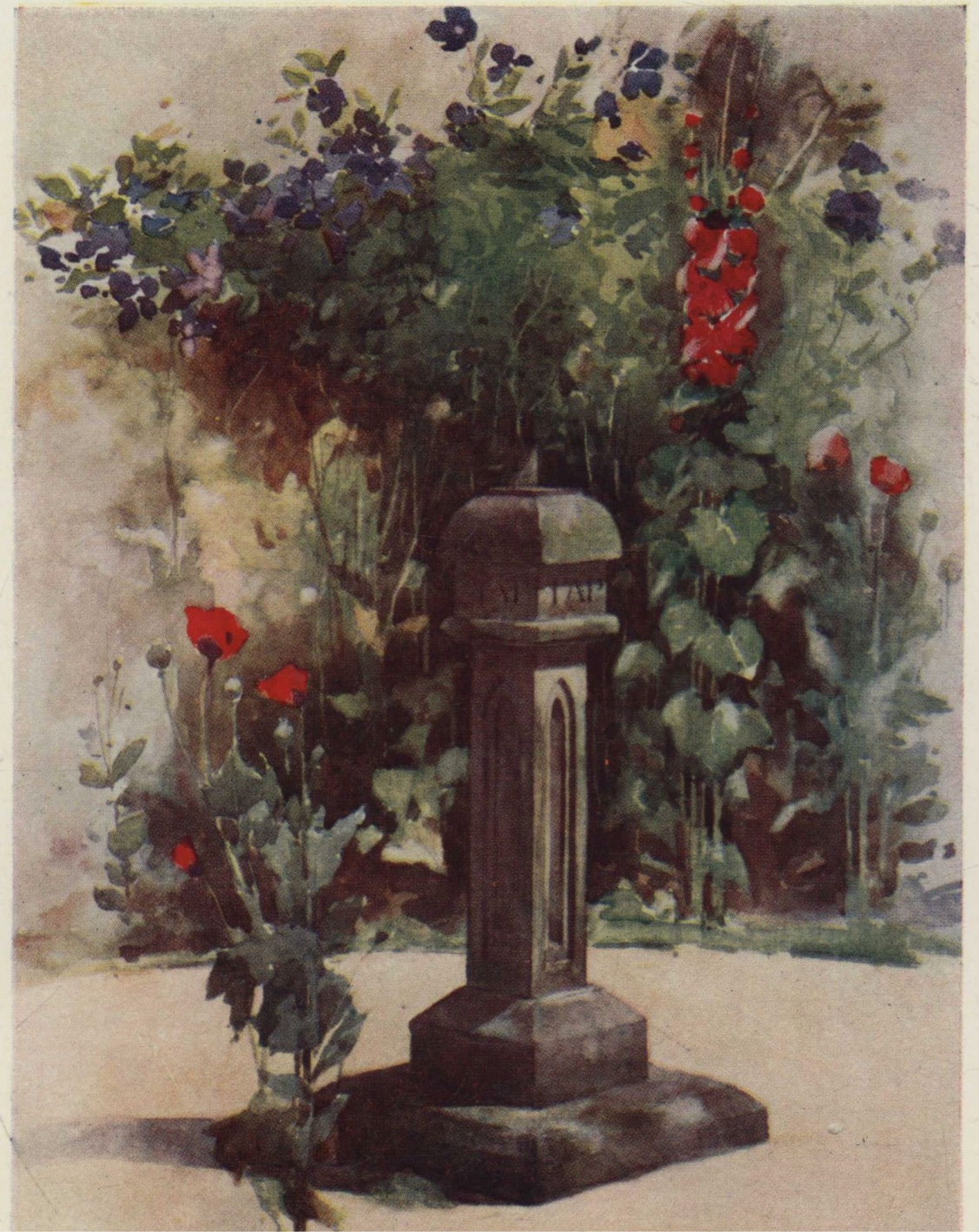
- “The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever” (Is. 40:7-8; cf. I Pt. 1:24-25).
- “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring” (Prov. 27:1).
- “Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow” (Ps. 144:4).



# Sir Walter Scott's Sundial

1771-1832

Sir Walter Scott married Charlotte Carpenter on Christmas Eve, 1797. After he designed his gardens and lawns, he installed a vertical sundial which had a Greek inscription on it: ***The Night Cometh***. F.W. Boreham tells us that he “trembled lest the Night should fall before he had finished the work which he had been appointed to do.”



# Working While It Is Still Day

No one honestly doubts that there will be a “Last Call,” the title of Os Guinness’ final chapter in his classic book, *The Call*. The author of Hebrews affirms that “it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb. 9:27). One day, Paul writes, “we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God” (Rom. 14:10).

But this is not the end of the story. There is more to consider. Jesus’ promise also includes ***the day***, the time we have been given between our birth and death. What shall we do with the time allotted to us during our lifetimes? How shall we spend our minutes, hours, and days? **In the shadow of the night, we discover the meaning of the day.**



# Working While It Is Still Day

- **“We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work” (Jn. 9:4, ESV).**
- In what context does Jesus speak these words? As I mentioned earlier, Jesus and His disciples passed by a man who had been blind since birth. The Twelve wanted to know who had sinned that resulted in his being born blind. Was it this man or his parents? Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, *but that the works of God might be displayed in him*” (vs.3).
- Jesus divine attributes were revealed in this healing – especially His extraordinary power and goodness – and His glory was manifested.



# What Is the Meaning of the *Day*?

“When the sun has risen, man rises to his labor; but the night is given for rest. Jesus therefore calls the time fixed by the Father ***the day***, in which He must finish the work commanded Him. Just as every man called to some public office has to be employed in his daily task to do what the nature of his office demands. From this we should also deduce a universal rule, that **the course of a man’s life** is, as it were, his day. Therefore, as the shortness of daylight stirs laborers to industry and toil, that they may not be overtaken by the darkness of night in the middle of their work, so when we see that a short time of life is allotted to us, we should be ashamed of lazing in idleness. In short, as soon as God enlightens us by calling us, **we must not delay, lest the opportunity be lost**” (Calvin).



# How To Live in the Day

1. “Christ took this poor blind man in His way, and cured him *in transit* – **as He passed by**. Thus should we take occasion of doing good, even as we *pass by*, wherever we are” (Matthew Henry). The Holy Spirit will lead us to those whom He has called us to serve and will intersect our lives with those He has placed in our paths. We should not pray for more opportunities, but for eyes to see the opportunities right in front of us.
2. We **must** work the works of Him who sent Me. This speaks of obligation and duty. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we **should** walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).



# How To Live in the Day

3. The works which we do are the Father's works. We are His vice-regents in the world and have been sent to accomplish **His** mission. How easily we can lose our God-centered focus and think about what we want to accomplish in life: "I want to find **my** purpose in life." "**I** want to finish well." Or, "**I** want to be the best person I can be." Does your "bucket list" define your life purpose?
4. Open your heart and listen to God. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" (Ps. 32:8).
5. Are you about your Father's business? Spurgeon said, "I would quite as soon not be, as live to be a useless thing. Better far to fatten the fields with one's corpse, than to lie rotting above ground in idleness."





**“Thou hast made known to me  
the ways of life.”**

- King David (Acts 2:28)





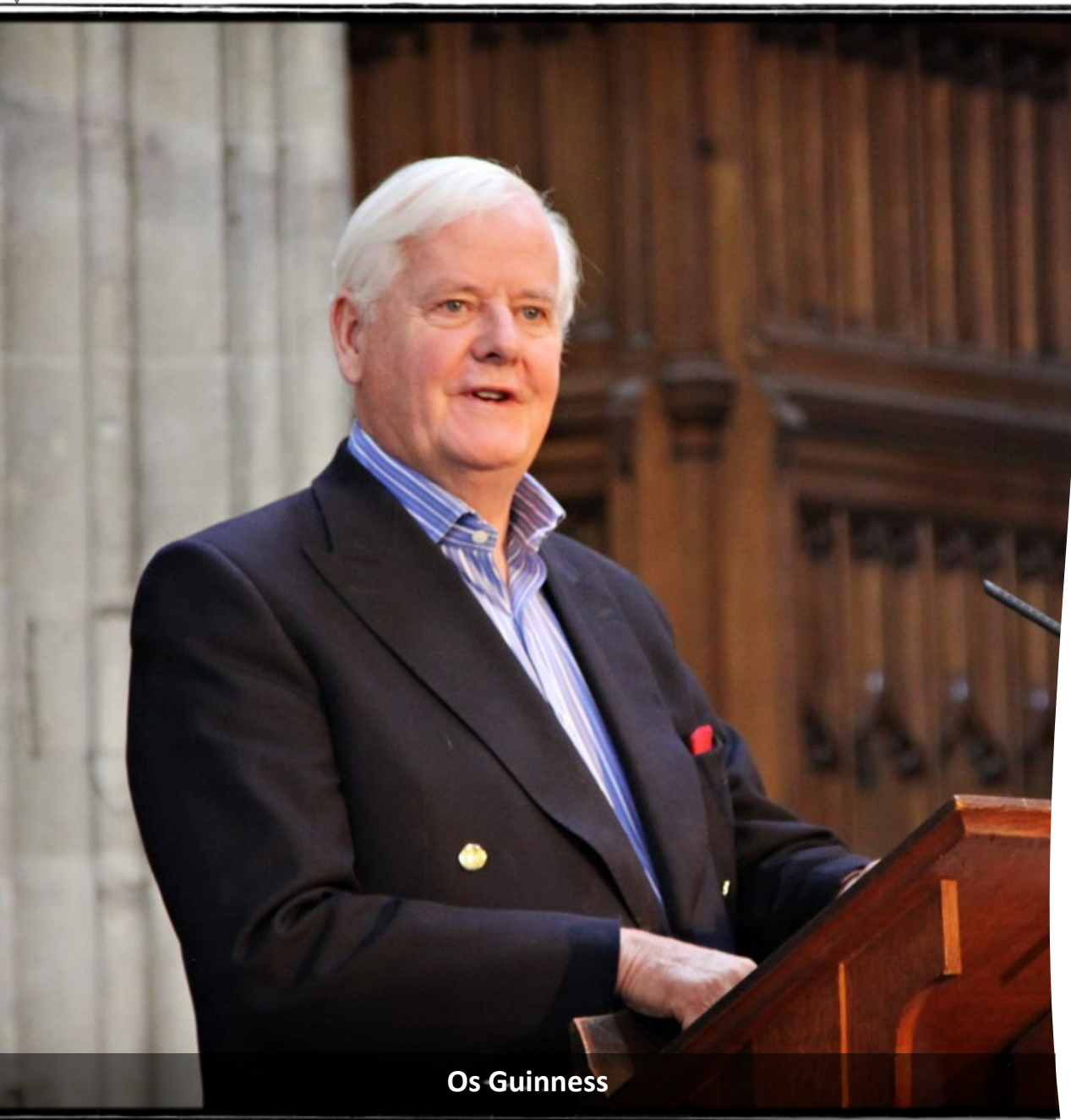
# How To Live in the Day

6. Set aside the desire to have certainty in life. “There is nothing certain under heaven but God. Uncertainty is upon all things but upon His Word” (Spurgeon). “It is foolish and rash to inquire into hidden things, farther than God permits us to know” (John Calvin).
7. Keep seeking the things above, where Christ is (Col. 3:1).  
“Remember him – before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:6-7).

# How To Live in the Day

8. Use your time wisely. “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16).
9. Surrender. “What Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, how Thou wilt. I had rather speak these three sentences from my heart in my mother tongue than to be master of all the languages in Europe” (John Newton).
10. Serve God in your own generation while it is still “day.” For David, **after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation**, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers, and underwent decay (Acts 13:36).





# Living Passionately in the Day

“Are you ducking the questions that seeking raises in you? Is the quest still formal, abstract, and at arm’s length for you? Or are you facing the challenge with all your heart, mind, and soul, rising to your full responsibility in answering all that God and life are addressing to you? Let your heart and mind run deep. Engage with every fiber of your being on the long journey home.”