

“Death for Life”

A Cross for a Crown: The Great Exchange #4

INTRODUCTION

As we conclude our sermon series this Easter Sunday, we will consider the greatest exchange of all made for us at the cross: death for life. The good news of Christianity is that we can have abundant, eternal life. But this life is made possible only by the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the Old Testament, Isaiah prophesied of this great exchange in a prophecy echoed by Jesus seven centuries later. Jesus, our messiah, offers to exchange beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, and praise for despair. This study considers the significance of each of these great exchanges in our lives.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

Is there anything in your closet that either brings you joy to wear, or that you put on when you feel joyful?

Study Questions (45 MIN)

Beauty for Ashes

Q1. Read Isaiah 61:1-3; Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10

Isaiah tells us, to those who mourn or grieve, the Lord bestows a beautiful headdress to replace our ashes. In times of the Old Testament, to cover the head with ashes was a token of self-abhorrence and humiliation. It is an outward symbol of the condition of a repentant heart. Why would the recognition of your spiritual condition be a reason to grieve? The Lord replaces the ashes of grief and repentance with an ornament or headdress, as might be worn by a bride or groom. (a “pěer” from a root word meaning glorify or beautify). In the Sermon on the Mount, what did Jesus say about those who mourn? In what ways then can we understand the phrase “blessed are those who mourn?” What does Paul say ultimately results from godly grief (2 Corinthians 7:9-10)?

Oil of Gladness for Mourning

Q2. Read Isaiah 61:1; Galatians 5:22; Acts 10:38; Luke 10:20

God offers us the oil of joy to replace our lamenting. In the first verse of Isaiah 61, how are “The Spirit of the Lord” and “the oil of anointing” directly linked? We are told in Gal 5:22 that the fruit of the spirit results in, among other things, joy. Following the statement that “God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power”, what resulted from that anointing? Even though we may

rejoice when God’s power is revealed through us, what does Jesus tell us is the ultimate source of joy (Luke 10:20)

Praise for despair

Q3. Read Isaiah 61:3; Matthew 12:18, 20; 2 Corinthians 4:13-16

In the final great exchange Jesus removes our spirit of despair. The phrase used here can be translated in many different ways; despair, faint, heaviness, discouragement, weakness. It comes from the image of a wick that has nearly gone out. Can you recall a time in your life where you felt this way? If so, can you share that experience with your group? What are we told about Jesus’ fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in Matthew 12:20? The comfort that comes from God’s presence in our lives gives birth to an attitude of thanksgiving to God. What do you find in 2 Corinthians 4:13-16 that would cause your praise and thanksgiving to overflow? At this time you may want to pause and offer prayers or songs of praise to God in recognition of what He has offered to you by His death on the cross.

Wrap-Up

This Easter season we celebrate the gift of life we have been offered through Jesus death and resurrection. He offers to us a beautiful headdress in exchange for the ashes of humiliation and repentance. He anoints us with the oil of gladness in the Holy Spirit in exchange for our mourning. And when we are weak and failing, His presence fills us to overflowing with praise.

Memory Verse

and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair...

Isaiah 61:3a NIV

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: (see back for more notes) _____

Challenge:

Ask God if there is an area of your life that you need to “exchange” with Him.

