

# Sermon Transcript

## Reflecting on Life's Jelly Beans

Jeremiah 31:31-34 and John 12:20-33 | Fifth Sunday in Lent | March 17, 2024 | Pastor John Klawiter, preaching

Grace and peace to you my friends in Christ,

Upon arriving to Jerusalem, Jesus speaks about his impending death.

The hour has come, he says.

Should I say, “Father, save me from this hour?”

No, Jesus says, “it is FOR this reason that I have come to this hour.”

*What if you had just one more day? What are you gonna do today?*

To better illustrate that, what if your days were measured in jelly beans?

VIDEO SLIDE: ***What if you had just one more day? What are you gonna do today?***

Better yet, what are you gonna avoid doing today?

Would you be more intentional with your time? Would you put the phone away or turn it off? Would you spend time alone or with others? Would you go on an adventure or spend that time meditating at peace?

What would matter?

Jesus has an interesting perspective on dying.

First, a gardening metaphor. A single grain of wheat that gets planted in the earth—essentially dies to its previous self—but then flourishes when it’s tended to with water and sunlight.

Those seeds grow—Jesus, a few chapters later, will continue that metaphor by telling the disciples he is the vine and they are the branches. If you noticed the vine on the altar (**slide of vine**), the branches sprung forth with fruit from our confirmation students on Wednesday night as they looked at that passage and what it means for them to continue to grow in faith.

When he then says, **“those who love their life will lose it and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” (SLIDE)**

This verse doesn’t translate the smoothest, but I believe Jesus implies that to lose our lives for the gospel means that we’re planting seeds for more life to spring forth.

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In that case, as Jesus talks about his life coming to an end, the harvest will be seen in how his teaching continues to prosper and grow into the future through these disciples. **(FIELD)**. Literally, each seed produces massive fields of God's love for the world.

As one thing dies, new life begins.

He might be talking about you and me.

To this day, we're part of that growth from that initial seed, planted on a hill then buried in a tomb. Yet from that, new life appeared.

It's a powerful way to understand what Jesus Christ does for us.

Death isn't the end.

But it's not just about the next life, in my opinion. Eternal life is promised, but isn't this about our current world? What do we do in this life?

In the book, **Freeing Jesus** (SLIDE), which a group of about 20 Faith members are reading right now, Diana Butler Bass talked about the theologian Irenaeus who believed **"the glory of God is the human being fully alive."**

She said, "sin is the rejection of the beauty and goodness of God's image in every person."

During our book club discussion, we had a lively debate about original sin and whether a baby is born sinful or instead has the propensity to sin.

It was deep.

What we agree really matters is the relationship forged through the covenant and promises of baptism.

Today, Skylah and Jackson become the newest members of the body of Christ.

What does that mean?

In our Lutheran theology, baptism means that each day we are dying and rising with Christ.

It sounds morbid, but let me break it down.

We make a declaration by renouncing a bunch of stuff. **Renounce (definition)**, we declare that we will abandon or turn away from something we possess. Like **Eddie Murphy** in *Coming to America*, renouncing his throne!

When we renounce the **devil and all his empty promises** (RENOUNCE slide), we are shedding that part of ourselves and rising anew with Christ.

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When we renounce all the **powers of this world that rebel against God**, we put God first when other powers ask us to pledge our full allegiance.

And when we **renounce the ways of sin that draw us FROM God**, we resist that temptation of putting other idols first. We could easily find other things to put first. Yet, in our walk of faith, what does God really want?

For us to be closer to God. To have our sinfulness gone—to die. And our new life to rise.

If the glory of God is for us to be fully alive, these aren't rules (*point at screen*) dictating a strict obedience free of sin and living perfectly.

No way, God knows that we will sin and fall short. God knows that when we live fully, we'll make mistakes and be broken.

Through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, we don't have to dwell in that sinfulness. We are forgiven. Each and every day. We are relieved of our burdens. We become anew, each and every morning.

I encountered someone this week who changed my life... but I had never met.

His name is Elijah (**SLIDE**).

Elijah died suddenly at the age of 33.

He didn't have it easy—Elijah was non-verbal and wheelchair bound.

What I didn't know was that Elijah was much like that seed that grows, not necessarily seeing the full bloom that's a result of how God used his life to help others.

He was born in a time when kids like him didn't live at home.

Elijah went to the capitol. He was strong. Bound and determined. Change happens one conversation at a time. Through building a network of advocates and voices to make change.

Elijah found that through becoming the first client for Pediatric Home Services. Through the steadfast leadership of one of his doctors.

Through fierce allies like his parents and siblings, walking right next to him.

He trained a lot of people—including countless nurses, caregivers, and doctors who decided to stop putting a number on things like life expectancy or quality of life and realized that Elijah would have a vote on that.

Elijah's resiliency made him a great example of how a kiddo could live at home—and even thrive—such that many people got to live with their mommies and daddies because of him.

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I should know, my own 15 year old trach'd and vented son, Oliver, benefits from the leadership of Elijah—making it normal to realize the best care he can receive is living with his loved ones.

Elijah's mom, despite all of the grief, told me that through all the challenges he faced and through the many hospital stays, that being his mom showed her that God is love.

She didn't get to say goodbye—he died unexpectedly and without warning. But Elijah prepared his loved ones—none of them take life for granted.

***What if you had just one more day? What are you gonna do today?***

In that final day, Jesus spent it gathered with his closest followers. Teaching. Serving. Eating and drinking. Praying.

I hope you all have many more jelly beans to use up in this life. But I also hope that the promise of life in Christ inspires each and every one of us to make the most of the time we have left.

Like Elijah, we are called to do great things.

What we do makes a difference. When we live in the fullness of Christ, it's not about us, it's about what the Holy Spirit does THROUGH us. New life springs forth, all around us. Amen.