

Got Life?

△ **Know Jesus + Know Peace (vv.5-10a)**

△ **No Jesus – No Peace (vv.10b-12)**

In the Name of our gracious Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – dearly loved of God:

Memorial Day weekend is a time for remembering. Driving through small towns in Minnesota and Iowa these past few days showed American flags at cemeteries and along highways at parks. We treasure the memory of those who gave their lives so that we could enjoy the freedom of conscience that allows us to worship here today. Remembering with gratitude is good.

Remembering can also be painful. Along with loss of loved ones, many are flooded of questions about the way things might have been. When you're young your dreams are growing. Soon you're chasing them with all the energy of youth. Then comes responsibility, obligations and taxes that seem to slow things down considerably. Before you know it, more years are in your rearview mirror than out front. Disturbing questions can trouble your peace of mind: *Did I take the right path? Did I reach my goals? Does it matter?* Some sign makers came up with a catchy question some years ago. Remember? *Got milk?* Here's a better question: **Got Life?** God wants your answer to be, "Yes!"

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Teenagers struggle to find a career path, marry or not marry, where to live, etc. For many chasing the "American dream" is all they know of life. I was reminded of that while attending *Handworks* in Amana, Iowa. Premier woodworkers were there from all over America. I had as much fun meeting them as looking at the tools. What struck me was their age – very much like mine. It was like a looking glass for where I'd be today if I had decided to become a cabinet maker instead of studying for the ministry.

Woodworkers will tell you they're a strange lot. So much is done by touch and feel, but eventually they wrap their philosophies of life into their work. One company owner asked about dealing with people's problems as a pastor. I told him your heart is like a battery that needs charging. Power it with the Word of God and you overcome the problems. He asked a few more questions until finally I told him about a woman who walked into my shop back in my seminary days. She was all excited about my work, but disappointed to hear I was going to be a pastor. "Couldn't you build all these beautiful things and inspire people?" she gushed? "I don't mean to be rude," I told her respectfully, "but all these things are going to burn up. The only thing that counts in the end is whether you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Do you trust God to give you eternal life just as He promised?" Hearing my story these many years later, the company owner only commented, "That's an interesting perspective."

For me the mystery of the Trinity is a great comfort in all the mysteries of life. Through His Apostle John He says, "**Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.**" Once again my gracious God is leaving me with no regrets because in all of life's twists and turns He has never left me. You and I are not victims of fear because God keeps saying, "**Fear not!**" We are not crushed by loneliness because God keeps assuring us, "**I am with you.**" We don't chase empty philosophies that blow away like sawdust because God says, "**Be not dismayed for I am your God.**" The whole world can shake its head and walk away, but we always have all we need because God says, "**I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**" (Isaiah 41:10 TPA)

Look how honest you can be when you **Know Jesus** lived and died and lives again for you. There were things you should have done differently, words you left unspoken that needed to be said. Some lonely stretches of your life may have come because you chose to walk alone or drove people away by your selfishness. Your heart can grow a long bony finger of guilt that keeps poking you at night. But

then you turn back to Jesus and feel His gentle hands that grip you like a loving father soothing his troubled son. One daughter of mine always relaxed and focused when I would gently hold her head in my hands. That two-handed comfort God here calls *“testimony.”* How this soothes the soul!

“This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. We accept man’s testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart.”

With these words God is slipping two rings on your finger. His engagement ring holds all His promises of grace and forgiveness. Jesus stood in the *water* with John the Baptizer while the Father’s voice boomed from heaven His everlasting pleasure with Jesus as His Son. The Holy Spirit came down with power and purpose in the form of a dove. And when Jesus had walked all the dusty roads of life, He climbed that gory hill to the cursed cross. There His *blood* washed away every reason for regret, every failure to speak, every cause for doubt and despair. Ever since Jesus ascended to God’s right hand, He and our heavenly Father keep sending the dear Holy Spirit to put the second ring on your finger, His wedding ring of faith. That same *water* of Baptism washed us clean and made us His own. As we come by invitation to His Holy Table, His precious *blood* cleanses our hearts and minds and bodies deep down inside. *“I am His and He is mine! What can I want beside?”* Like a young bride in the arms of her loving husband, we rest in the arms of the Triune God. We wake up every morning to His smiling face. We slumber in the care of Him who never slumbers or sleeps. When you **Know Jesus**, you **Know Peace**.

△ **No Jesus – No Peace (vv.10b-12)**

The ditches of life are filled with carcasses and twisted wreckage of those who ignored the signs. They flew too fast through the curves. They suffered head-on collisions with God almighty. He flashed the headlights of His Law in the Ten Commandments, but they wanted to drive wherever they desired. It felt good, so they were absolutely sure His justice would never catch up with them. God tried to warn them, *“Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.”* People just crank up the music and ignore Him. Someday soon all will see those ditches flow into the fiery lake of burning sulfur designed to torment the devil and his demons for all eternity. God is still trying to keep everyone out of the unending agony of hell.

Still today God *“wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”* (1 Timothy 2:4 NIV) But the Triune God is too kind to force Himself on anyone. He kindly, gently sent His Son on a volunteer rescue mission to pay the debt of every sinner. Come into God’s courtroom and see. People still trust the testimony of someone under oath. God has no one greater to swear by, so He swears by Himself. He gives His simple testimony in two parts. *“This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life.”* That’s not tomorrow or the next day. Past tense means you already have *“eternal life.”* As one sister singer crooned so long ago, *“We’ve only just begun to live.”* How many others thought they could *“find a place where there’s room to grow,”* only to end up in a small box underground with nowhere else to go? They missed the second part of God’s testimony: *“This life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”*

You may come from a long line of preachers with grandparents who were very devout. But what does that matter unless you believe in Jesus too? Without His rings on your finger of faith, you have **No Jesus** and you have **No Peace!** One pastor kept calling on a straying member. Time after time there were reasons why he could not come to church. Finally the pastor blurted: *“Don’t you know that you have no other Savior besides Jesus?”* The man came back and has been growing ever since.

Got Life? With Jesus all can say, *“Yes!”* And He has a place with room to keep on growing in the wide open spaces of heaven. *“Forget...the past,”* God says. *“See! I am making everything new!”* (Isaiah 43:18 TPA) Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.