Romans 8 teaches us that our body is subject to death because of sin. In fact it says: *We face death all day long.*

From the time that we are born we face death. And it is not just a risk of life, even before we have finished growing, our bodies begin to decay. We face every kind of disease, the tapping of our strength:

Diabetes, high blood pressure, cancers, arthritis, our strength is tapped and our bones and joints fail, our eyes dim. Vigor is replaced with pain.

We don’t need the bible to tell us *we face death all day long.*

**Youth**

I had a friend growing up who loved to watch horror movies on TV. I liked going over to his house because we only had a B&W set and I thought is was so cool to watch color TV! Ironically the movies we ended up watching were always those great 1950’s classics with Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff and Lon Chaney in them. They were all shot in black and white.

But there was one movie we saw, one of those B movies from the late 60’s that *was* in color. I remember it so well since it was really creepy:

**Night of the Living Dead** – 1968. I don’t remember any of the actors...

- The dead suddenly come back to life.
- But these Living Dead – are not living at all but are cold, unthinking, unfeeling, animated corpses. A scary idea for sure!
- The popularity of Zombies today shows us the fascination remains.
- There is an innate fear of the dead.

Last week Pastor Bart preached on John chapter 9 and spoke on *When Seeing is Believing*. Did you take a look at the stereograph that he printed in the bulletin? I tried it for some time and could not see the image of the stereograph, but I understood the message just the same. The fact is sometimes *believing* is seeing, especially when we understand the imagery used in the Gospel of John.

In Chapter 9 a blind man receives sight and believes in Jesus as the Messiah while those with vision did not see or believe in him. Jesus concludes the story with a charge to those who refused to believe: "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

A similar paradox is given to us again in Chapter 11 of John, our gospel reading today. Jesus comes to the town of Bethany, the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Lazarus had died and was already buried for four days. Jesus told Martha "Your brother will rise again!" Martha replies, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day." And then Jesus said something remarkable: *I AM the resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?*
Wow! How can someone really live who is already dead? And how can the living never die when even Lazarus died again after being raised?

I repeat these same words of Jesus as a call to worship when I do a graveside service or a funeral. They have so much meaning, but on the surface they seem to not make sense. But there is a double meaning:

First there are those who have died physically, who have died believing in Christ, who yet live in a deeper, eternal sense and will be physically raised as Martha said on the last day.

Secondly, there are those who believe in Christ who shall never experience spiritual death. Just like the imagery of the blind man who saw what those with vision could not, and believed. Jesus proclaims here that those who believe, even if they suffer physical death, will never die spiritually.

He calls us to believe in Him for he IS Both the resurrection and the Life!

And because he lives we too shall live... even physical death will fail to quench the believer’s Real Life.

The Book of John starts out:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

- Ch4 Jesus has the water of Life
- Ch6 I AM the bread of Life
- Ch8 I AM the light of Life
- Ch9 I AM the door to Eternal Life
- Ch10 I AM the Good Shepherd that lays down his life
- Ch14 I AM the Way the Truth and the Life – nobody comes to the father but by me.
- Ch15 I AM the Vine – all those who abide in me have Life

And here in chapter 11 he says that he is the resurrection and the life and that he gives life to whomever he is pleased to give it. He does this through the power of his own indestructible and immutable life.

Jesus IS Life! – I AM that I AM.

I AM that which brings into being

I AM the creator of Life

And now we can understand the hope of our Romans passage:

Romans 8 the spirit gives life even to our broken, mortal bodies.

10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus
from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

So we may face death all day long, but we have the source of Life in us that overcomes even the darkest hour. We have the Spirit of Life that even give life to our mortal bodies. Do not despair...

**Spiritual Death**

But you may ask, what is this spiritual death you speak of? It is eternal separation from God predicated by a lack of faith and a failure to believe in Jesus Christ. These are the people who are alive, walking and breathing and yet are dead; those who refuse to believe in Christ. You have heard it said:

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. John 3:16-18

I tell you the truth, those who are dead in Christ, who are already buried in the ground, are more alive than those who walk this earth.

People who are alive today who do not believe in Christ are already dead. In fact they are the Living Dead, not the zombies of the movies. Every moment of their life, with every heartbeat, they come closer and closer to Eternal Death and eternal separation from God. The increasing corruption of their bodies - is just a warning of their impending doom. It is a slipping away. They are the real walking dead... despite their rosy cheeks and joyous smiles they live their lives already condemned, with no hope but to trust in Christ alone.

**THIS IS WHY WE MUST BELIEVE - WE MUST PRAY**

*I AM the resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?*

But for those who believe, to all those who receive Christ, he gives the right to become children of God, born of the spirit and endowed with eternal life. In our John passage Jesus proclaims clearly the hope that we have: that we will yet live, even though we die, and all who believe in him will have everlasting life.

For those who are in Christ, who live with ever increasing corruption of their bodies - every moment we live we come closer to release -

- Every moment we live - Every heartbeat
- Every pain - Every Sickness
- Every Corruption - Every Cancer
- Brings us closer to our release - closer to freedom from sin and death.

As Romans eight goes on to say:
Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:35, 37-39

**Handel’s Messiah: 1 Corinthians 15**

55 “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We who are in Christ should have no fear of Death. In fact we should see death as a sweet, sweet friend.

During Monte’s organ concert last Friday he played a piece by JS Bach called Komm, süßer Tod, komm selge Ruh – It was not just an organ piece but is in fact a Hymn. Here are the words:

*Come, sweet death, come, blessed rest! Come lead me to peace for I am weary of the world, O come! I wait for you, come soon and lead me, close my eyes. Come, blessed rest!*

*Come, sweet death, come blessed rest! It is better in heaven, for there is all pleasure greater, therefore I am at all times prepared to say “Farewell,”. I close my eyes. Come, blessed rest!*

*Come, sweet death, come blessed rest! O world, you torture chamber, oh! Stay with your lamentations in this world of sorrow, it is heaven that I desire, death shall bring me there. Come, blessed rest!*

*Come, sweet death, come blessed rest! Oh, that I were but already there among the hosts of angels, out of this black world into the blue, starry firmament, up to heaven. O blessed rest!*

*Come, sweet death, come blessed rest! I will now see Jesus and stand among the angels. It is henceforth completed, so, world, good night, my eyes are already closed. Come, blessed rest.*

I can only assume that many have read that Hymn and thought it a Lament, or even thought it depressing. But those that do would not have known our savior or understood the truth of Hope in this life. Do you struggle with pain in this life? Do you seek someone to give you hope in the face of despair?

*I AM the resurrection and the Life, says the Lord. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?*