

Raised To Life

1 John 5:9-13

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Well, it's been quite a week in court and committee rooms across our nation. And we, the public, have been witness to an amazing array of testimony. Much of which is rather debatable or dubious.

Testimony:

- Terry Kilrey on the stand, cross-examined about a sworn affidavit which testifies to a shady and possibly illegal encounter between himself and Mayor OBrien. Who offered what to whom, and when... If anything?
- Brian Mulroney testifying on the nature of his relationship with Karlheinz Schreiber; the envelopes, the cash, the dates.... what *really* went on?
- Ruby Dhalla testifying before a parliamentary committee regarding her employment of domestic workers. What did she do and say... or not?
- and then there's the seemingly endless parade of expert witnesses of one flavour or another to the public inquiry investigating the tragic death of Polish immigrant Robert Dziekanski. Was it a taser-induced death, or not? Were the RCMP reckless, or not? What's the testimony saying?

Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Sure – they **say** “yes.” But what do they **really** mean?

Can you **trust** the testimony they give?

Don't you find that as the public we become a bit jaded to all these cases and inquiries and hearings and what is all said there?

“Yeah, yeah. Sure, sure. Whatever.....”

Friends, I hope we **don't** allow that “*Yeah, sure, whatever*” attitude to filter down into our soul, and into the way we receive the testimony of God.

Testimony of life.

Testimony of eternal life.

And how we come to live - or not live - in that eternal sort of way.

St. John puts the bar rather high on what he writes.

About as high as it could possibly go, actually.

“Accept what is written here,” he says, “or else call God a liar.”

Doesn't get more stark than that, does it?

“Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son.” (v.10)

It's a call to hold what God testifies - to hold that in your heart.

To hold something in my heart means not just saying, “Yes, sure, that's true” the way I could, say, agree that the testimony which Brian Mulroney gave to Justice Jeffrey Oliphant was true and then carry right on with my life as if that testimony had never been given.....

...because, quite frankly, his testimony has nothing specific to do with me. It may directly affect his wife, Mila, or their children Caroline, Nicolas, Mark, and Ben. But it doesn't change how I'll think or behave when I get up tomorrow morning.

I don't hold the Oliphant inquiry in my heart.

The heart, in the way that people in Bible times thought of it, wasn't just the place where I feel things – though some people mistakenly assume that to be the case.

The heart is, in bible reference terms, the place where one's decisions were made, where the **WILL** was located, where thinking and behaviour originated.

What I hold in my heart are those core principles and values, the stuff of life that is **REALLY** important to me, the stuff that affects how I think and what I do and what I long for.

What I hold in my heart is the testimony of God - verse 10.

Because it **does** affect how I think and what I do and what I long for.

And John encourages believers who read his letter -

- he encourages you and me here this morning -
- to hear God's testimony

to treasure it
 to hang on to it.
 to hold it in our hearts.
 to shape our lives by it.

Meaning no confession without conversion.
 No agreement without integrating it into our daily lives.

Verse 11:

*And this is the testimony:
 God gave us eternal life,
 and this life is in his Son.*

That is part one of the testimony. There's also a second part.

*Whoever has the Son has life;
 Whoever does NOT have the Son of God does not have life.*

End of testimony.

You have life when you have the Son.
 You do NOT have life when you do not have the Son of God.
 There are no in between options offered.

Which is not a particularly Canadian, middle-of-the-road, let's-try-to-accommodate-everyone kind of approach.
 But, then, I suppose being prototypically Canadian isn't necessarily God's first priority, is it?

"You have life when you have my Son in your heart," says God.
 - converting how you think and what you do and what you long for.
 - integrating your faith statements with your daily action plan.

"If you don't have my Son in your heart you aren't really living," says God.
 - no matter **what else** you may think or do or long for.

I find myself face to face with a confusing array of offers every day.
 Offers on how to make me feel more alive; to experience greater vibrancy.
 You, too?

- health care and nutritional products; from the Special K diet to special bacteria in your yogurt to creams that make your wrinkles disappear.
- various authors have cookbooks offering you recipes for vibrant living; including the raw food diet.
- planned communities that guarantee you close contact to the energy and stimulation of the city, its nightlife and social scene - while yet keeping you within reach of the tranquillity of nature, and thus allowing a centred balance to your existence.
- gyms with personal fitness trainers who will coach you through losing the pounds, building the muscle tone, increasing endurance and energy for life.
- little blue pills designed to increase vibrancy in life with your spouse.
- centering and meditation seminars designed to increase your inner calm, and dispel the draining of your life energy down unproductive channels.
- success in your career say employment coaches; that's how you find a sense of real meaning in your existence.... makes you feel alive.

Now, none of these things are bad in and of themselves.

For example, getting exercise **can** make you feel better. That's one reason why I'm preparing to run the half marathon next weekend. A stronger physical body DOES make my mind and soul feel better.

But, way down deep inside, when push comes to shove –
 – it doesn't give me life.

My life, and yours, find their centre only in the Son of God.
Without the Son of God our lives have no centre, and will eventually collapse.

This is God's testimony.

And this is the bottom line why St. John wrote his letter of encouragement to the Church. *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.* (1 Jn 5:13)

Life.

Not just a set of religious beliefs and rituals.

Life - without qualifiers at all.

You come fully alive when Jesus is in your heart.
Without Jesus, you're on a dead-end road. No matter what else is going on.

Find yourself objecting or questioning that statement?

Please ask yourself this -

What does Jesus give which cannot be found elsewhere?

What does Jesus do for us that we cannot do for ourselves?

Have an answer?

How about this –

We've just come through the Easter season - remembering the holy death and resurrection of Jesus.

Today we remember the Ascension of Jesus into heaven — as he bodily left this earth and bodily entered heaven.

Which is where he is right now — in his fully embodied, raised from the dead, eternal state.

Jesus - right now, every day - fully connects earthly life, in-the-body life with life in heaven.

What does Jesus give which cannot be found elsewhere?

What does Jesus do for us that we cannot do for ourselves?

He sits at the side of the Creator of All Life and links the power of that creator to our lives.

He is the conduit of power.

He is the link between today and forever.

He is the one who, says Romans 8, is forever tapping God on the shoulder and reminding the Heavenly Father of this need and that situation in our lives.

He is the one who is preparing a place beside him in that heavenly realm, to which we go when the present earthly parts of our lives grow tired and expire.

Even then for us, when we die, our lives don't end.

They continue - in the very presence of God.

And then, one day, when Jesus returns to earth, we that have expired with him will return and will continue living – this time in the New Creation; on the New Earth — doing new and wonderful tasks for the Creator, with him watching and smiling.

What does Jesus give which cannot be found elsewhere?

What does Jesus do for us that we cannot do for ourselves?

Jesus, by his presence on earth, and by carrying that earthly part of himself into heaven, validates earth life.

In fact, all earth life is now ruled by Him.

That is what we celebrate at Ascension.

As Abraham Kuyper put it, there isn't one square inch of Creation which is excluded from the claim of Jesus' ownership.

He places his hand over it all and exclaims, "It is mine!"

We come truly alive when we acknowledge that ownership, and live accordingly.

That is - when we hold that claim of ownership in our hearts.

Whether it be in our diet management, or in our urban planning and housing choices, or in health care practices, or intimacy with our spouses, or career paths we follow.

Jesus claims them all.

If we acknowledge that claim, and allow that claim to affect how we think, and what we do, and what we long for, we will experience life as God meant it to be lived.

And, holding Jesus in our hearts, we can be sure that these precious few years of life here on this earth are not all there is to our existence. They are but the first link in the chain -
- in an eternal chain.

And what we do here in these years resonates right through into eternity.

BUT -

If you ignore Jesus, refuse to hold him in your heart, then when your life on earth expires, your existence and any meaning that it had, disappears into dark oblivion.

You are, then, **lifeless**.

Do you believe that?

Here's the take-away truth statement for today.

**When you believe in Jesus,
you are
already now
living your eternal life.**

Eternal life is not for some future, beyond-the-clouds time.
It begins now.
And continues then.

Your daily activity is important - NOW.

It is eternally important.

The way you train your mind to think is important - NOW.

It is eternally important.

The way you treat your body is important - NOW.

It is eternally important.

How you love your neighbor matters - NOW.

It is eternally important.

As Jesus is, fully alive and human, in God's presence
So will all of us, as believers in Jesus, one day be there, too.

Our lives will move from the chapter here - to the next chapter there.
Not two disconnected chapters.
But two chapters in one story.

**What does Jesus give which cannot be found elsewhere?
What does Jesus do for us that we cannot do for ourselves?**

That's what.

And so - go into this week living like that.
Live as if what you do this week will have significance for eternity.
As if it is part of your eternal legacy.

Because

- through Jesus -
it

does.

Through Jesus, our lives horizons have expanded infinitely.
All the way into eternity.

We are no here-today-and-gone-tomorrow puffs of smoke.

Our lives matter.

In Jesus.

For ever.

Because God said so.

Period.