



THE CHRISTIAN FUNERAL

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!" (Revelation 14)

Preamble

Upon the death of a loved one, please notify the Church & one of the Pastors immediately. One of the Pastors of St. Matthew will meet with you to give you spiritual comfort and guidance. He will also help to guide you through the plans for the funeral service. A list of scripture lessons and hymns are provided in this booklet to help plan the service.

A. What is a Christian Funeral?

A Christian funeral is for those who have fallen asleep in the Lord. It is a worship service of the Triune God for the benefits of the living, that they might be comforted by the Gospel of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has redeemed us by His blood. This service also affirms the resurrection of the Christian dead to everlasting life with Christ, for St. Paul wrote,

I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus (1Thessalonians 4)

Funerals at our church are set within the context of the larger ministry of Word and Sacrament. They are services of worship honouring **not the deceased** but our gracious and merciful God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It gives comfort and support to family and friends with the power of God's Word and the prayers of the church by being a service of hope in the resurrection of the dead for those who have fallen asleep in Christ our Saviour.

B. A Note on Eulogies

Most people have gained an idea of how a funeral should be conducted either from other churches they have attended or from television. In many of these services a Eulogy is seen as central to the funeral service. **Eulogy is Greek for "word of praise"** – and that is precisely what takes place; the funeral service becomes about the deceased and what a good person they were and what a good life they led. Sadly, either consciously or unconsciously this becomes the basis in most people's minds for the reason

why the deceased might know salvation – because they were a good person who was loved and will be missed. While this may be in keeping with the theology expressed by other churches and certainly the belief of our society, in actuality it runs completely contrary to the truth of Holy Scripture and the doctrine of the Lutheran Church.

For this reason **eulogies are not a part of the funeral services of the Lutheran Church.** The service, the readings, the hymns and the sermon will all focus and point to the salvation won for the deceased by Jesus Christ on the cross and given freely to them as a gift of grace and mercy. Salvation comes to the deceased as a free gift of God not by anything they may have done in life to deserve it. (*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23*)

While the funeral service in the sanctuary is reserved for proclaiming the salvation won for the deceased by Jesus, the lunch and gathering time after the service is an ideal place for the breaking of bread and sharing of stories and family remembrances. We encourage the family to bring any eulogies or poems or words of remembrance there so that they might not only express their own loss and love but also as a means of encouraging others to likewise begin to talk and express their sadness at the loss of someone they loved.

While we at St. Matthew do not our wish to offend or to deny the wishes of the family with respect to any eulogies or video clips, we are at the same time, as pastors of Lutheran Church–Canada, called to be faithful to our belief in and confession of the resurrection of Christ as the sole source of hope for eternal life.

C. Who May Be Buried from St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church?

The relationship of a person to the church determines, as far as human beings can know, whether our pastor may officiate at the funeral of a given person. The pastor of our church will be bearing a proper and positive witness to the Gospel if:

- a. The deceased was a member in good standing of St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church. The member may have been temporarily residing out of town for various reasons (armed forced duty, university, winter residence, etc.).
- b. The deceased was a member in good standing of a sister congregation. In this case, the deceased's pastor must be contacted, and the relatives should provide valid reasons for the wish of the deceased to receive Christian burial from our church.
- c. The deceased was a non-member who was in the process of becoming a member and gave reason to believe they died in the true faith.
- d. The deceased was a person to whom our pastor ministered and that person confessed their sins, professed faith in Christ, and gave reason to believe they died in true faith.
- e. If a person meets the above criteria but died by taking their own life, they may be buried from our church if they did not commit suicide as a statement of unbelief.

D. What Happens Before, During and After a Funeral at St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church?

The Christian funeral is first and foremost a Divine Service of God.

Therefore:

1. Our pastor is responsible for the funeral service.
2. The service will be held at St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church. The family members are to contact our pastor if there is to be an exception.

3. All funeral music will rightly honour God. It must glorify Christ, therefore **only music which is in harmony with the doctrines of Lutheran Church–Canada will be used**. Specific requests should be discussed with our pastor and may not be deemed as appropriate for the service.
4. A funeral pall, if available, may be used in the service. It covers the casket and symbolizes baptism and the forgiveness of sins. Ask our pastor for more information.
5. As members of Lutheran Church–Canada, our congregation and pastor may not participate in unionistic services (when pastors from different denominations participate in the same service). The Handbook of Lutheran Church–Canada states that pastors and congregations must renounce “unionism and syncretism of every description, such as: b. Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession.”
6. Because their beliefs and practices are contrary to and opposed to the Christian religion, we do not give Christian burial to lodge members (for example: Masons, Moose, Eagles, etc.)

E. The Responsibility of the Congregation

The Christian funeral is an act of worship of a Christian congregation. The congregation pays its last respects to one of its members and at the same time confesses the faith in which the member departed.

A funeral is a congregational matter. The Church, which is the Body of Christ, is always concerned when one of the members of Christ’s Body falls asleep in Him. The congregation reverently commits the bodies of its dead to the earth from which it came and from which they will rise again to everlasting life. (1 Thessalonians 4)

Those who died in the Lord are never cut off from the Christian Church. They simply join the angels and the archangels and all the company of heaven to laud and magnify the glorious name of Jesus, even as we do here on the earth. We are joined together as one Church in the Divine Service of Christ our Redeemer.

Therefore, the members of our congregation show love and concern for the bereaved by their presence at all funerals. When one of the saints goes on ahead to be with Christ we are sorrowful and weep, even as our Lord wept by the grave of Lazarus whom He loved. (John 11) We all grieve at the death of a Christian even as the children of Israel did: “Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned...” (Number 20)

From such examples we learn that sorrow and compassion are not private matters when it comes to the death of a Christian. Christian funerals are not only for the members of the immediate family and close friends, but for all Christians because we are brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, we mourn for our brothers and sisters who have died and rejoice that they now live with Christ forevermore.

F. Bulletins

In the intent of love and in a spirit of Christian care St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church will be responsible for the funeral service (in reference to printing out the bulletins for the service, and organizing the service). Together with the pastor of St. Matthew, family members will select hymns and scripture lessons, and discuss other requests pertaining to the ceremony. Bulletins for the service will be printed and copied at St. Matthew. All concerns regarding the service and spiritual care may be addressed to the pastor of St. Matthew.

G. Music

Music in the church is to glorify God, pointing to the crucified and resurrected Christ in whom the hope of our salvation rests. The music and the texts for a funeral (organ, piano, vocal, and/or instrumental) should be consistent with this standard. Secular music is not in keeping with the purpose of a Christian funeral or with the principles of Christian worship.

Our pastor will help you select music that will be meaningful to you and appropriate for the funeral service. You will find a list of hymns below that may help your selection and are acceptable. If you are having a soloist, you must make your own arrangements and should notify the pastor of your intent.

Musical selections are usually chosen mainly from hymns, which reflect God's grace in Christ Jesus. We urge you to consider having the congregation sing a hymn. It is also a mark of Christian worship.

It is recommended that taped or recorded music not be used, although vocal and/or instrumental solos can be meaningful at a funeral. Please bear in mind, this is a Christian ceremony and all music must be true to this principle.

All musical selections must be cleared with the pastor, and given to the organist (if using the organist from St. Matthew) in time to guarantee practice.

H. Luncheon

If a luncheon is desired after service, St. Matthew will provide members to serve a lunch which the family is asked to supply. Any details of the luncheon can be discussed directly with the committee tasked with that responsibility.

I. Fees

Any fees relating to the lunch may be discussed directly with the committee responsible.

Organist: A suggested honorarium of \$200.00

Pastor: While there is no fee, the family is free to give an honorarium as well.

TRADITIONAL HYMNS (*See the Lutheran Service Book*)

Abide with Me, Fast Falls the Eventide
Amazing Grace
Beautiful Saviour
Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer
How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds
I Know that My Redeemer Lives!
If You But Trust in God to Guide You
Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won
Jesus, Lead Thou On
Just As I Am

The King of Love My Shepherd Is
What a Friend We Have in Jesus
Lift High the Cross
The Lord's My Shepherd
Lord Take My Hand and Lead Me
Love Divine, All Love Excelling
A Mighty Fortress
My Faith Looks up to Thee
My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less
O God, Our Help in Ages Past

PSALMS

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,

for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (NIV)

Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.

Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth.

He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire.

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah (NIV)

Psalm 77:1-6, 11-14

I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me.

When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted.

I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint. Selah

You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.

I thought about the former days, the years of long ago;

I remembered my songs in the night. My heart mused and my spirit inquired:

I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.

Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God?

You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. (NIV)

Psalm 90

Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men."

For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.

You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning--

though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered.

We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation.

You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.

All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan.

The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants.

Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble.

May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children.

May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us-- yes, establish the work of our hands. (NIV)

Psalm 103:1-12

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits--
who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel:
The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.
He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;
he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (NIV)

Psalm 121:1-8

I lift up my eyes to the hills-- where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip-- he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD watches over you-- the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.
The LORD will keep you from all harm-- he will watch over your life;
the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. (NIV)

Psalm 118:5, 8-9, 13, 15-17, 19-20

In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free.
It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.
It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.
I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me.
Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The Lord's right hand has done mighty things!
The Lord's right hand is lifted high; the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!"
I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done.
Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.
This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. (NIV)

Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;
O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.
If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.
I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.
My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.
O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.
He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins. (NIV)

Psalm 144:1-4, 9-11

Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle.
He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues
peoples under me.
O LORD, what is man that you care for him, the son of man that you think of him?
Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow.
I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you,
to the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword.
Deliver me and rescue me from the hands of foreigners whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful.
(NIV)

Psalm 139

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

You hem me in--behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"

even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men!

They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name.

Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you?

I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (NIV)

OLD TESTAMENT READINGS

Job 19:21-27

"Have pity on me, my friends, have pity,
for the hand of God has struck me.

Why do you pursue me as God does?

Will you never get enough of my flesh?

"Oh, that my words were recorded,
that they were written on a scroll,
that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead,
or engraved in rock forever!

I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.

And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;

I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me! (NIV)

Isaiah 25:6-9

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines.

On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.

In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." (NIV)

Isaiah 55:11-13

So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed." (NIV)

Lamentations 3:22-33

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."

The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;

it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.

Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him.

Let him bury his face in the dust-- there may yet be hope.

Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace.

For men are not cast off by the Lord forever.

Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love.

For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men. (NIV)

EPISTLE READINGS

Acts 2:38-39

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." (NIV)

Romans 6:3-5

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. (NIV)

Romans 8:28-35, 37-39

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

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. (NIV)

Romans 14:7-8

For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.

If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. (NIV)

1 Thessalonians 4:13 18

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. (NIV)

1 Corinthians 15:1-26

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed. But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (NIV)

1 Corinthians 15:35-51

But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?"

How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another.

There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another.

The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;

it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being" ; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.

The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven.

As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.

And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye. (NIV)

1 Corinthians 15:50 –58

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--

in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (NIV)

1 Peter 1:3-9

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you,

who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (NIV)

1 John 3:1-2

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (NIV)

Revelation 7:9-17

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?"

I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.

Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.

For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (NIV)

Revelation 21:2-7

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.

He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. (NIV)

GOSPEL READINGS

Matthew 5:1-16

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (NIV)

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (NIV)

Mark 10:13 –16 (for children)

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.

When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. (NIV)

John 10:27-29

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.

My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

John 5:24-27

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. (NIV)

John 6:37-40

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (NIV)

John 10:11-16

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.

The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. (NIV)

John 11:21-27

"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said to her, "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?"

"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." (NIV)

John 12:23-26

Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. (NIV)

John 14:1-6

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (NIV)