

Christ: Our Fountain Of Youth

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Almost nothing in history supports the legend that Spanish conquistador Ponce de Leon searched for the “Fountain of Youth.” (Don’t tell the tourists in Florida, though!) It’s definitely true, however, that various people all over the world have sought (and even claimed to have found) water that restores youth. We human beings just don’t like the idea of aging and dying. We’re downright desperate for some way to avoid it!

Jesus told Martha, the sister of Lazarus, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die*” (John 11:25-26). What? Believers don’t die? Wait a minute – we’ve seen any number of believers die. How can Jesus say this?

Look at the entire passage! The Lord wasn’t saying believers won’t die physically. He said even if they do, they will live (because He is the resurrection and the life). But faithful believers won’t die eternally (the “second death” as in Revelation 20:14).

But in the meanwhile, Christ blesses us with perpetual youth! No, not in the bodily sense – once again, think beyond the physical. The aged Paul knew full well that death awaited him, yet he wrote, “*We do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day*” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

No, God hasn’t given us H2O that will restore our youth. He has given us something infinitely better: spiritual life in Christ here and now, and the confident hope of living with Him and all the redeemed of all ages in Heaven forever.

Are you drinking from the fountain of youth?

Love And Litter Bugs

Discarding litter that motorists throw out in front of your house is aggravating under the best of circumstances. It is worse when two-thirds of it is beer cans! If you throw them in your garbage, you are vulnerable to gossip. If you put them in a sack before you put them in the garbage, you are destined for even juicier gossip. My wife has always frowned on my suggestion that we leave them lying there until they rust beyond recognition and then throw them in the garbage.

If you happen to be the preacher, you can’t solve the problem as easily as two elderly women who lived next door to their preacher. They said, “Let’s throw them in the preacher’s garbage can; everybody knows he doesn’t drink!”

All of this serves a purpose of sorts. It reminds us that circumstances are not always what they appear to be on the surface. Paul taught Christians to be charitable and to draw unfavorable conclusions only cautiously. “*Love suffers long and is kind . . . does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil . . .*” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5).

Love will cause one to interpret a seemingly suspicious action a hundred different ways to give the benefit of the doubt, rather than assume the worst possible interpretation first.

--Jack Wilhelm (via RSVP Newsletter) adapted

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Set Your Heart

Is a person just blessed to be selected from the world by God for great things ... or does God use a person for great things because that person selects God over the world?

1. The answer to this question is so important in the ‘hand-out’ culture in which we live. If God just randomly chooses a person for great things, then that gives us an excuse not to do great things for Him

because “He hasn’t selected me.” This would mean that God’s sovereignty is really favoritism at its worst; it lets us shrink back into His spiritual welfare system waiting for our next scrap.

But God has always been about our individual responsibility. Yes, He did the work of salvation through His Son on the cross; but we are to believe, obey, love, forgive, serve, and go – among other acts of obedience. These are actions that require us to stand up from our spiritual couches, brush the crumbs off our laps, and roll up our sleeves.

2 God raised up Ezra to be a priest to lead His people returning from exile in the way of the Lord. Was Ezra just in the right place at the right time to get chosen haphazardly? Ezra 7:9-10 says, “... *the good hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had set his heart TO STUDY the Law of the Lord, and TO DO it and TO TEACH his statues and rules in Israel.*” What have you set your heart to DO for Him?

3. Sounds like Ezra was no spiritual slacker. What about us? Ephesians 2:10 tell us, “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*” Each and every day good works for each of us have been prepared in this day that the Lord has made. Are you walking in them? Are you diligent in your search to know what they are?

And so neither is God a spiritual slacker as He plans for us. If God could raise up an Ezra who would make good choices at the right time to be used by God to do great things for His Kingdom, then what has He planned for you to DO today? Rather than dwell on opportunities missed yesterday, might you be rolling up your sleeves and be willing to DO all that He has planned for you to DO today and tomorrow?

--Doug Kashorek (via sermononline.com)