

Eternal life. We read a lot about that in God's Word, the Bible and you hear us pastors talking quite a bit about that, too. But have you ever wondered where exactly eternal life *is*? The short answer to that question is: ***Eternal life is where Jesus will be.***

When we think of eternal life, we think of a place called heaven, where Jesus will be when we die or He comes back on the Last Day. When we get there, life will be endless. It will be everlasting. We will be with Jesus, and how glorious that will be! Until He returns on the Last Day, we will be at rest, blissful in His presence. But when that day of resurrection comes and Jesus brings our bodies out of the grave, ***then*** we will know eternal life in all its fullness.

With our new eyes, we will see incredible colors and beauty. All creation will be remade with stars visible in all their multitudes. Lakes will be crystal-clear and mountains will be majestic. Animals will live in harmony. We will see so many amazing wonders in eternal life!

And we will hear the most incredible music. Praises and honor sung to Jesus and His Father on the throne. Choirs of angels and resurrected believers will lift our spirits to heights never before experienced. Think of that one song that moves you to joyful tears and imagine that being sung for all eternity.

And we will have arms and hands to hold one another once again. I have heard it said from Christian counselors that widows and widowers especially miss the touch of a spouse. It is lonely, but that loneliness is intensified because the everyday touches of a hug, hands being held, a kiss, a gentle caress are missing. Without human touch, we wither. Our grief reaches deeper into our spirits because these moments of loving touch disappear. But in the eternal life of resurrected glory, we will hug and touch those we loved and who also believed in this life.

Yes, eternal life is where Jesus will be. With sights, sounds, and touches, we will live endlessly in everlasting joy with Jesus.

But there's another answer to the question: Where's eternal life? It's where Jesus ***has*** been!

Jesus prayed in our text today that He would be glorified and He would glorify the Father. Now when we hear the word *glorify*, we think of someone who's won a championship or gold medal. The person stands on a pedestal and receives the glory and adoration of the cheering crowds. But the apostle John had something more basic in mind. He used *glorify* as simply revealing someone to other people. It shows who someone is. Jesus is praying that He will reveal the heavenly Father to us.

One time, Jesus was with His disciples and told them that He is the way and the truth and the life, that no one comes to the Father except through Him. One of His disciples, Philip, said, “Show us the Father, and it is enough.” Jesus responded, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:8–9). Jesus glorifies the Father by showing who the Father is and what He thinks of us. What we see when we look at Jesus is that our God is a God of love and life.

Watch what Jesus does one day. A man is in such a pitiful state. He’s been kicked out of the village where he once lived. Now he’s and dependent on others to give him food. His clothes are tattered and dirty. No one comes close to him. If anyone does, he yells out “Unclean!” “Leper!” and everyone avoids him. No one has touched him for months. Talk about social distancing! He is so lonely. The pain goes deeper than the sores on his skin.

But Jesus comes by and stops. He goes up to the man and (*pause*) touches him. Yes, Jesus heals him with a word. The sores are gone. But the simple touch is one of love. The man is given his life back. See God glorified as this act of love brings joyous praise to the man’s lips. He is given life and life eternal in that touch.

Or listen to the sounds of agony coming from the three crosses at Mt. Calvary. Two criminals on either side of Jesus. The stench of death hovers in the air. Blood and sweat run into Jesus’ mouth as He tastes the suffering required for the death in this world. One of the criminals asks for a blessing, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Now listen closely to Jesus glorify His Father. “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk 23:42–43). A criminal who deserves to die is given life, eternal life, from Jesus.

Jesus glorified His Father. Not on a pedestal and with cheers but on a cross with jeering going on all around Him. Yet, the sights and sounds of that day declare the glory of God as we see and hear God’s love giving eternal life. Perhaps the most well-known Bible verse declares it well: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). Yes, where’s eternal life? Where Jesus has been.

Then there is yet a third answer to: Where’s eternal life? It’s where Jesus is *now*. Jesus did not stay dead. He rose from the grave and is here now with us, bringing eternal life.

You see, eternal life needs to begin, and it doesn’t start after we die. No, eternal life begins as soon as Jesus gives us life lived in the love and mercy of the Father. A child is brought to be baptized. “In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” See it. Hear it. Touch it. Eternal life has begun in that child’s life as Jesus scoops

her up as His own child. When you live by faith in Jesus, forgiven and loved by the Father, you are living eternal life right then and there.

Or when you come up for the Lord's Supper. Jesus is truly present in the bread and wine. Touch it. Taste it. Then you get up to leave and hear these words, "The body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, strengthen and preserve you steadfast in true faith until life everlasting." Right here, at this altar, you receive eternal life because Jesus is here.

The same is true for the words we hear from the Bible. (*v 8 of our text Jesus prays to the Father*): "I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me." In the liturgy, sermon, readings, devotions, Bible study we hear, read, meditate on, and are comforted by that same powerful word of God. Where Jesus is in Word and Sacraments, there is eternal life.

Then there is one more answer to the question: Where's eternal life? It's where Jesus is **with you**.

Eternal life is not so much a place in the future. Eternal life is not just what happened in the past. Eternal life is not just here in the church. Do you see where each answer led you? Eternal life is where Jesus is. He will be there in glory forever, and so is eternal life. He was there on the cross revealing the Father's love, and so is eternal life. He is here in this worship time, and so is eternal life. But He is also wherever you go, and when you are with Jesus, you are living eternal life. Leave here and you can see it, hear it, touch it.

At the gas station when someone comes up to you, saying, "My car is on empty, and I don't have any money for gas." It looks like Jesus leading you to use your debit card to put gas in the tank. It sounds like a pleasant conversation as the gas is pumped. It's the touch of a handshake as you speak a word of blessing.

At the restaurant when the server brings you your food. It looks like a prayer, but even more. Eternal life is Jesus leading you to speak kindly to the server, to clean up the table so the busser has an easier job, and a generous tip for all the staff that saw you pray.

Where is eternal life? Where Jesus will be. Where Jesus has been. Where Jesus is right now. Where Jesus is with you every day. What a treasure eternal life is because it's simply life with the Father through His Son, Jesus. Amen.