

I.N.J.
MCN Sunday 2022 — Isaiah 12

Do you want to live forever? The idea of a fountain of youth providing living waters is not just something from Disney movies. It has been around for thousands of years. The Greek writer Herodotus wrote about it 500 years before Christ. Lucas Cranach, who famously painted Martin Luther's portrait also painted what he thought the fountain of youth would look like. It is on our minds also. Products that prevent or slow aging take up a good portion of shelf space in any pharmacy.

We like living. Our Lord has blessed us with many earthly gifts. We live in a country that enjoys comforts. We have conveniences, friends, entertainment, work to do, the strength to do it, and time to play or relax at the end of the day...and if we don't have that, we hope for it.

We love the idea of having all the things. We are satisfied if we receive them as gifts, but also are proud if we have worked hard for them. In fact, it is possible that we focus so much on getting what we can out of our earthly lives, and extending our time here, that we ignore the fact that we *will* live forever. Scriptures clearly tell us that we will be raised from the dead and our souls and bodies will be reunited for eternity.

But we don't like to think about *that* kind of living forever. It is unknown and maybe scary and might even sound boring. At times considering life after death is more about avoiding hell than living forever in heaven.

The world offers all kinds of human explanations for what happens when we die and most of them don't provide much in the way of joyful hope. They encourage us to get as much as we can in *this* life because they don't see much offered in life after death. Here are some ideas popular in America today:

- 1) There is nothing after death.
- 2) You will be absorbed into the universe or reincarnated.
- 3) Life will exist in a spiritual realm. Live on like ghosts like in Beetlejuice.
- 4) Everyone goes to heaven or the "far better place," a "happy hunting ground" or the like.

In the creeds of the church, we confess that we believe in "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." We clearly read Jesus' words in Matthew 25 how it will be on the Last Day when ALL the dead are raised and those with faith in Jesus will go to a glorious eternity while those who refused to have a relationship with our Lord will live forever in eternal punishment. Everyone is going to live forever.

Aren't there serious implications of this truth for our living today? Yes.

Our text today was written by Isaiah who prophesied to the people of Judah in the Southern Kingdom after the Assyrians had taken the Northern Kingdom into captivity. God used Isaiah to call back those who wandered from a right relationship with Him. Isaiah reminded them of



God's great love for them and the promise of salvation even when they wanted to ignore God in order to live large in the here and now.

We also need to be called back into a relationship with our Lord for the same reasons. We need to be told again and again about the endless love our God has for us. In our text we read, "I will give thanks to you, O Lord, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away." God had a reason to be angry with the Children of Israel. They were tempted to live for today, focused on God's gifts instead of the giver. They, like us, had difficulty in seeing themselves as eternal beings.

It is impossible for humans to simply *decide* that we are now going to joyfully see ourselves as people who will live forever. It would imply that we can save ourselves—that we can earn the right relationship with our God. We can't. We need someone to save us. Our text tells us that "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation."

Jesus is the salvation for the people of Judah and for us. He suffered and died for the selfish love we have for the things of this world and offers us life eternal. In our text it says that "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." This is not just a fountain of youth for an earthly life that will always be fraught with pain, war, and tragedy. This well of salvation promises an eternal glorious life where for His people our Lord "will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Rev 21:4

This truth is our confidence for life in heaven, but also for our present earthly life. Because we can draw water from Christ's well of salvation, we can live without hanging desperately on to the things of this life. We can love without expecting in return. We can do crazy things like love our enemies and even pray for those who persecute us. We can serve in ways that seem insanely generous to the world. And we do this with joy.

And we don't want to simply keep the news about the wells of salvation to ourselves, we want the world to know. In our text we read, "Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth."

We have the privilege of doing this when we are with people here at home, but we also do this when we partner with those who are sent overseas to proclaim this good news.

Since 2014, Mission of Christ Network (MCN) has sent 80 people to serve in cross-cultural mission. We call these missionaries "mission partners" because they are sent to partner in mission with organizations, churches and schools that are proclaiming Christ. Presently we have 47 serving in 20 different countries around the world.

MCN missionaries are often asked why they need to go overseas to be witnesses when 50% of Americans don't belong to a church. The answer is simply that 50% of Americans are Christian



and witnesses to those who don't know about the "well of salvation" we find in Jesus. Only 3.8% of the Taiwan population is Christian, 5% in China and less than 1% in Thailand.

Our Lord's command is "go and tell." In our text we read that our God wants us to "make known his deeds among the peoples...Sing praises to the LORD for he has done gloriously; let this be made know in all the earth." MCN mission partners average telling 2000 people per week about Jesus. Last year, the congregations with which one of MCN's mission partners works in a closed country had 639 baptisms! So many are coming to the wells of salvation.

It is our privilege to be partners with MCN in this work. Of course, we can give to support a mission partner. We can remember them in prayers as they serve where we can't. We can also identify and encourage likely candidates to serve. We can volunteer to go ourselves.

So, do you want to live forever? Yes...and it is now. We are living today in a relationship with our creator. We are living today confident in God's care for us now no matter how much or little we have. And by God's grace we are confident in more than just a fountain of youth...we know of His promises of eternal glory. This news is too good to be kept to ourselves. We have been called to share it with all who don't yet know our Lord's "wells of salvation."

Please pray with me: Dear heavenly Father, with joy we draw water from your "wells of salvation," confident in our eternal life with you. Help us to make known your deeds of salvation in Jesus "among the peoples" that this good news of Jesus will be "made known in all the earth." In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

