

If you haven't read it, "Tuesdays with Morrie," published in 1997, is the true story of how sportswriter Mitch Albom becomes reacquainted with his former college professor Morrie Schwartz. This happens shortly after Morrie is diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, a terminal neurological illness. Morrie was Mitch's favorite teacher in college because he was so unconventional and insightful. Mitch decides that although he hasn't spoken to his favorite professor since graduation, he needs to go see him to say goodbye. Mitch's goodbye turns out to be a series of consecutive Tuesdays spanning many months. During that time, one of the things Morrie said to Mitch was this:

*“Everybody knows they’re going to die, but nobody believes it. If we did, we would do things differently...*

*There’s a better approach than kidding ourselves. To know you’re going to die and be prepared for it at any time. That’s better. That way you can actually be more involved in your life while you’re living.*

*Every day, have a little bird on your shoulder that asks, Is today the day? Am I ready? Am I doing all I need to do? Am I being the person I want to be? ... The truth is, once you learn how to die, you learn how to live...*

*Most of us walk around as if we’re sleepwalking. We really don’t experience the world fully because we’re half asleep, doing things we automatically think we have to do...*

*Learn how to die, and you learn how to live.”* So says Professor Morrie Schwartz.

Have you learned how to die? Can you deal with the thought of your own death? I’m here to tell you today that the Christian faith is uniquely able to help you wrestle with questions of death and life.

There is wisdom in what Morrie Schwartz said. He knew (as we all know) that when there’s something really unpleasant that we have to deal with (and what could be more unpleasant than thinking about your own death) a very common human reaction is simply to delay. We do this all the time. You have to have a really hard conversation with someone, you delay. You have a big assignment or project to do, you delay. You think about making some hard changes in your life, you delay. You think about the stone cold truth that one day you will be dead...how are you going to face that? How are you going to deal with that? Will you delay?

A word of advice? Don’t. The Bible says, “Now is the day of salvation.” Now. Today. Why now? Why today? Because you know as well as I do that there are no guaranteed tomorrows. But not only that. It’s not just “act now, the deal ends tomorrow.” What God is offering you today will enable to make peace with that bird on your shoulder. The one Morrie Schwartz was talking about. The one that keeps asking, Is today the day? Am I ready? Am I doing all I need to do? Am I being the person I want to be? Those questions are terrifying, don’t you think? No, I’m not being the person I want to be. Are you? No, I’m not doing all I need to

do, are you? Is today the day? I have no way of knowing. Am I ready? Are you ready to die—leave it all on the table? This is what makes Christian faith so persuasive and powerful and beautiful. You can say “yes.”

You can say, “Yes, I’m ready.” You can look at that bird on your shoulder square in the eye and say, “I am ready because Jesus lived, and Jesus died, and Jesus rose again and Jesus lives and rules. If today is my last day on earth, I’m ready, because my last day here is my first day in eternity. I’m ready for what comes next, and it’s more than just a quote-unquote better place. I will be with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in perfect love and happiness. He has paid for my way there. Yes, I’m ready.”

Do you have that confidence? You can. If you don’t, now is the day of salvation. Now is the time to shift your ultimate trust from yourself to Jesus Christ, who has secured your future with his suffering, death and resurrection. Now is the time to shift your functional trust from your performance to Jesus’ performance, from your track record to His. Think about it, now. The Bible says that God has made it possible for all people to live with Him forever. If you’re convinced that Jesus has opened this door for you, what is there to be afraid of? What is there to be worried about? Don’t you see? The promise of eternal life isn’t just about your final exit; it changes life now, today! There is always more beyond for you—the promise that things really will be better. So, with all that taken care of by a gracious God, and given to you as a pure gift, it is something that you do not have to work to earn, you can be fully engaged in what you’re doing. You can really live life.

None other than Martin Luther himself is quoted as saying, “Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.” Do you understand what he’s saying? Because Jesus has made you an eternal being, you can relax and do what needs to be done today. In fact, it makes what needs to be done today honorable and holy work. You can have this peace. You can welcome that bird on your shoulder. You can possess this sense of purpose and perspective, and you can have it now.