

(Transcribed by TurboScribe.ai. Upgrade to Unlimited to remove this message.)

I'm going to read the sermon text right now, and I ask you to listen and consider: Is there a word you find particularly important or that stuck with you? Or, yes, let's say the most important word in the text. So, the text goes like this. And that is the testimony that God has given us: eternal life.

And this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life. Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I have written these things to you so that you may know that you, who believe in the name of the Son of God, have eternal life. So, which word do you find most important in this passage? In my view, the most important word here is that God has given us eternal life. Whoever has the Son has life.

Interestingly, it doesn't say that whoever has the Son of God, whatever that means, will have eternal life. This text isn't about eternal life, which somehow exists after death, but rather it's about the present, the here and now. Whoever has the Son here and now has eternal life here and now.

So, let's take a closer look at what that really means, in two points. First, whoever has the Son, and second, has life. Or in other words, what does it mean to have the Son of God, and what does it mean to have eternal life? First, to have the Son of God.

I believe that this phrase, "having the Son of God," ultimately means that we are in a kind of relationship with Jesus. Just as we might say today, "I have a wife." I don't have a wife in the sense of owning her; I have a cell phone, but I don't have a wife.

When I say I have a wife, I mean I am in a relationship with a woman, a committed, marital relationship. So, I have the Son of God, for me that means I am in a kind of committed relationship with him. Follow-up questions can arise, at least for me three questions arose: how do I get into relationship with him? How do I stay in relationship, and how do I actually know that I am in relationship with him? And these questions lead us directly to the core of what it means to have faith, not as some abstract state, but as a living, dynamic relationship, a relationship that develops, that grows, and that must be nurtured.

How do I enter into a relationship with the Son of God? How do I enter into a relationship with God? A relationship always begins with a first step. In the case of Jesus, that means opening myself to him. This can look very different; for some, it begins with prayer, for others through reading the Bible, or through an encounter with another person who is already living this relationship.

It's about inviting Jesus to become a part of my life and, at the same time, being willing to give him space to change me. How do I stay in a relationship? A relationship that isn't nurtured withers. That's true for people, and I believe it's also true for the relationship with Jesus.

Staying in relationship means staying with Him. It means spending time with Him through prayer, through reflecting on His life and His words, through fellowship with others who are also connected to Him. It means inviting Him into our daily lives, discussing decisions with Him, and continually allowing ourselves to be suffered by Him.

And how do I know that I'm in a relationship with him? I think this question is trickier because it doesn't have an objective answer, but rather a much more personal one. I believe you can tell whether you're in a relationship with God by how you change internally. It's not always big, dramatic turning points, but often small things.

More patience, more peace, more trust. Perhaps you'll also notice it in the way you treat others. When you begin to see the people around you with different eyes, with more love or more compassion.

Through all of this, one thing remains crucial for me. A relationship is not a one-way street. It thrives on interaction, on listening and speaking, on giving and taking.

When I say I have the Son of God, that means he's invested in this relationship just as much as I am. And this is where the relationship with Jesus becomes so special. My relationship with my wife can be dissolved by her.

She could say, "Jonas, I don't want this anymore." The special thing about a relationship with God, or with Jesus, is that this possibility doesn't exist. Jesus is so full of love for you that he won't end the relationship with you.

That's nice at first, I'd say, but also quite difficult. Because this promise applies not only to you, but also to everyone else. Even those we don't like.

Even those who've really screwed up. Even every politician, no matter how right-wing. I find that hard to bear sometimes.

But that's the consequence of having a God who longs to be in relationship with us. When I say that God never ends his relationship with us, I don't mean that he approves of everything we do.

The point is, we can change people for the better much more effectively when we are in relationship with them.

Maybe you have someone in your family whose political views you don't share. You can tell them, 'I don't want to have anything to do with you as long as you vote for that particular right-wing party. Bye.

You've made a clear statement. But from now on, you no longer have any opportunity to positively influence this person. Because ending the relationship usually also ends the opportunity to change things for the better.

And I believe that, ultimately, is precisely the reason why God never ends his relationship with us: because he means well for us, without necessarily approving of everything we do. And because he knows that ultimately, there's nothing better for us than his being in a relationship with us. Therefore, you can enter into and end a relationship with Jesus.

And you can be sure, he will not end his relationship with you. His willingness to enter into a relationship with you never ends. So, to have the Son of God, simply and briefly, means to be in a relationship, a committed, kind of marital relationship, with him.

And then the second question: having eternal life. It was said that whoever has the Son has eternal life. Whoever is in a relationship with Jesus has eternal life.

But what is this eternal life? I found what I find to be a very fascinating Bible passage on this topic. In John 17:3, Jesus says, "And this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." And this is eternal life: that they know you, God.

For me, that means eternal life has less to do with, let's say, an endless period of time. Instead, it's about recognition, and that probably means something like having a deep, living relationship. If we have the Son, that is, if we have a committed relationship with Jesus, then that means we are already part of God's reality. This reality changes how we perceive and live our lives.

Perhaps we experience inner peace because we know we are loved and that our lives have meaning. We belong to God's family. The knowledge that we are never alone provides support and security.

God's Spirit works in us and changes our thinking, our attitudes, and our actions. It becomes visible in and through us that we already live in God's new world. And even in difficult times, we can trust that this world is not everything and that God will work everything out for the good.

Of course, eternal life also remains a promise for the future. The Bible describes it as a time in which we live in God's unclouded presence. Without suffering, without separation, without death, but this future does not begin sometime after our death.

It is already present in Jesus. This is the great comfort and joy of the Gospel. Eternal life is not a distant promise, but a reality that we can experience today if we are united with God.

Being in a relationship with Jesus means that I lead a life filled with a hope and love that transcends this world. Yet, it already takes shape in this world, so to speak, and is tangible. For me, that is the power of eternal life, when God's eternity can be experienced in our here and now, in our lives.

And now, in practice? So, is eternal life something you can practically experience here and now? A few ideas, a few thoughts from me. Perhaps you've lost your job and are facing an uncertain future. Instead of falling into fear, you can find inner peace through prayer and trust in God.

Perhaps you reflect on the words of Jesus, stop worrying about tomorrow, and find inner peace that gives you the strength to think clearly and start anew. Perhaps you have been deeply hurt by a friend. Instead of giving space to bitterness, ask God to help you forgive.

And after some time, you find the strength to seek out the conversation and rebuild the relationship. Perhaps you have a small child and are caring for them. It's certainly exhausting at times, but then you realize that in everyday moments, when reading a book, playing games, or listening, you are, in a sense, passing on God's love to your child.

As you do unto others, so I do unto you. Because you feel loved by God, you can then more easily pass on your love to your child. Perhaps you have received a serious diagnosis, but instead of being overwhelmed by fear, you experience hope and comfort through your faith.

You trust that your life is in God's hands and decide to live your remaining time consciously, deepen your relationships, and encourage others. Perhaps you decide to donate a portion of your income to people in need, even though you're not currently rolling in money. You are generous yourself and experience deep joy, realizing that true fulfillment comes not from spending on consumption, but from spending on others.

Incidentally, this is a principle that Jesus and the first Christians already lived out. Perhaps you often go out into nature and consciously observe the colors of a sunset, the rustling of leaves,

the chirping of birds. You feel gratitude for these moments and sense how they literally draw you into the presence of God. These become small experiences of eternity for you.

Perhaps you have a small group of Christian friends who meet regularly to pray, eat, and share life together. In this community, mutual support is practiced, and you experience that God's love is also tangible within the community. Perhaps you are afraid of making a decision. In prayer, you will then feel inner clarity and encouragement to dare something new, perhaps even the first step into a relationship with Jesus, to open yourself up internally, here and now, in your own home or here in the Church of the Resurrection.

Whoever has the Son of God has eternal life, eternal life that doesn't begin later but can be experienced now when we are connected to Jesus, and that changes the way we see the world, other people, and ourselves. Yes, I believe that being in a relationship with Jesus doesn't change everything, but it does change some things fundamentally, and that's why I invite you today to cultivate this relationship with Jesus, to begin it, to build it up, to resume it through prayer. I'm going to say the prayer out loud now, and if you like, you can join in with it in your heart. Jesus, I want a relationship with you.

I'm not sure exactly what that will look like, but I want to take the first step. Help me get to know you better, trust you, and make room for you in my life. Thank you for loving me and always being willing to begin or renew this relationship with me.

I invite you to be a part of my life. Amen.

(Transcribed by TurboScribe.ai. Upgrade to Unlimited to remove this message.)