

Death and everman essay sample



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Intro: Everyman is a morality play that was written by an unknown author in the late fifteenth century. The play is about man's reckoning with God upon our death. Thesis: The attitude toward life and death in Everyman is that in order to ascend into heaven upon our demise we must have done good works in our life. Paragraph one: God's criticism of man. The play starts with God stating all the ways in which he feels mankind has failed him. " And now I see the people do clean* forsake me". Paragraph two: Good deeds, Everyman is informed by death the he is to go on a journey and he must bring his " book of count". Paragraph three: Making up for lost time, Everyman with the assistance of his " friends", set out to wrong rights and to do good deeds. Paragraph four: Everyman is forsaken; as everyman begins his demise his " friends" begin to abandon him. Paragraph five: Good Deeds stays by Everyman's side, after beauty, strength, discretion and five wits forsake Everyman he is left with only his Good Deeds. Paragraph six: Everyman ascends into heaven, upon his death Everyman's soul is pulled into heaven by the angel whose has Everyman " book of count" Conclusion: The deeds we do while we are alive will determine where we go after death.

Death and Everyman

Everyman is the best known of all the English morality plays (Lessing), it was written by an unknown author in the late fifteenth-century, also known as the medieval period; it is thought to be a version of the Dutch play Elckerlyc (Britannica 2012). Everyman is about man's reckoning with God upon death. The basic concept of Everyman is that the deeds mankind does during life will determine where eternity is spent.

The title of the play Everyman, which is also the main characters name, has a significant meaning, the term Everyman means the typical man off the street. Everyman could be anyone; he is left essentially nameless as he is simply a representative of mankind. Everyman was not meant to be a specific type of person as he is to represent everyone; each person is to see themselves in Everyman. The author starts the play with the attitude that mankind has been sinful and has forgotten that one day it will be held accountable for its actions, as it says in 2 Corinthians 5: 2 “ for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil”. The author has the point of view that perhaps mankind is too focused on the now and itself and has forgotten about its souls and where they will spend eternity.

The play begins with the messenger imploring mankind to listen as God is going to speak. In God’s speech he lists his grievances against mankind; he complains that though he has given much mankind has changed little from its sinful, greedy ways. God states “ And now I see the people do clean forsake me” (Everyman), meaning that after all he has done mankind has done nothing in return and has outright and publicly defied God. He goes on to speak that mankind is living like there is no heaven or hell, acting as though they are unaware of the judgment day that will soon come. God decides it’s time to take mankind to task and make them accountable for their actions.

The Author continues with his attitude of man is selfish and sinful, in the play God tells Death that it is time to make man accountable; Everyman needs to

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bring his book of count to God for judgment. The book of count is the Authors term for a “ book of life” a list of man’s good deeds and misdeeds. The Author seems to think that mankind no longer remembers God, in the play Death sees Everyman dressed in his fine clothes and asks him if he remembers God, his maker. Everyman’s answer is, basically, why do you ask? Death then tells Everyman he is to go on a journey and bring his book of count with him it is time for his reckoning with God. Everyman is not ready, he has not lived the most Christian life, he has been sinful and has not done good deeds. Everyman tells death he is not ready but death tells him God has commanded it and he must go on the journey. Everyman inquires if he may have company on his journey; death says if he can find company he is welcome to bring them. The author thinking that mankind is sinful and selfish knows that Everyman will have a hard time finding someone to accompany him to the reckoning as there are not many who are ready to face God’s judgment.

As Everyman prepares for his journey he tries to rally his “ friends” to go with him to his judgment. Everyman speaks to his friends; Fellowship, Kindred and Cousin, all of which tell him that there is no way they would go on this journey. The author knows that with the many sins of man they would be deterred from following Everyman, no man who is sinful or selfish could possibly be ready for Gods judgment. So Everyman, continuing to look for companionship then turns to his friend Goods asking him to journey with him. Goods tells Everyman that loving him is the opposite of loving God, and he cannot go on this journey with him. He reminds Everyman “ that it is because of his focus on material wealth that he is now at risk before God’s

judgment" (Galens). In these statements the author is stating that a love of goods is like loving a false God, and as it is stated in the Ten Commandments "Thou shalt have no other God's", therefore Goods being a sort of false God cannot go before God as he himself is a sin. The Author sees that mankind has put his wants above his spiritual needs and is therefore placing things and the want for things above God; in essence man is worshipping false idols.

Everyman feeling very alone then turns to Good Deeds, however she is too weak to accompany Everyman. The author knowing that man has not done good and has been very sinful, uses the weakness of Good Deeds as a symbol of the weakness of man's souls. Good Deeds however has a sister knowledge, she is willing to help Everyman and accompanies him to Confession. The symbolism of this act is that with knowledge man should know that if he confesses his sins and asks for forgiveness, he will receive God's forgiveness. Everyman listen to Confession and quickly confesses and atones for his sins, this act strengthens Good Deeds and allows her to walk. The author uses this act to show that confession and atonement are good for the soul.

Everyman soon finds more friends who agree to join him and promise not to forsake Everyman, these friends are Beauty, Discretion, Strength and Five-Wits. They all accompany Everyman on his journey to the priesthood where he is to receive the holy sacrament and ointment at the insistence of Knowledge. As it says in Matthew 26: 26-28 "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had

given thanks he gave it to them, saying, " Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.", the author uses this to show that man should have the knowledge that he is sinful and that the sacrament of Holy Communion must be received in order for God's forgiveness to be achieved.

As Everyman begins his demise the friends who had promised to stand by him begin to forsake him. Beauty, Discretion, Strength and Five-Wits leave Everyman as he begins his final journey to his death and eventual judgment. The author uses this to symbolize that beauty and strength are not eternal and one day they will fade and leave man old and withered (Galens).

As Everyman finishes his journey to death he is accompanied only by Good Deeds and Knowledge, this is the authors way of saying in the end all man has is knowledge and himself. In the end man has to live with all the deeds and misdeeds he has done, when life is at an end he will only have himself, not his Goods, not his Beauty, not even his Strength just himself and his knowledge. At the end Everyman dies and the angel comes to receive Everyman's book of count. After his book is seen by the Angel and then Everyman ascends into heaven. Everyman ascends as he has made his amends, righted his wrongs and strengthened his soul. The author's view is that man's deeds determine his ascension to heaven or his dissention into hell. The point of these actions in the play is that all Everyman has done has strengthened his soul, he has become more faithful and a doer of good deeds.

Everyman is a morality play; the goal of such a play is to teach a moral lesson. Everyman is the most famous of the morality plays as it has a clear message and an interesting tale to tell. The play is about man's sins and his want for goods, and money. It is about righting our wrongs and living a Christian like life. The message of Everyman is that man's deeds decided our fate, they decide if we obtain salvation or if we spend eternity elsewhere.

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