

Echo From The Pulpit...



3 Facts About Death

Death is a taboo subject. Bring it up in a conversation and people will begin to move away from you. We make jokes about it, sidestep it and do almost anything about it except face it squarely on its face!

Today is one of the rare moments that as rational human beings, we can take a sober look at it and go away with a sense of focus. As the saying goes, there are only 2 things that are certain in this life - death and taxes.

If death is certain, it is therefore befitting that we learn all we can about it and make preparation to face it - not if it comes but when it comes.

1. Death is a mystery to many

It is a mystery because no one who has died has come back to tell us about it. But for the Christian, Jesus has died, resurrected on the 3rd day and for 50 days returned to talk, walk and eat with His disciples.

Indeed, Paul writes in 1 Cor 15:51 and following "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

For the Christian, death is clearly laid out in the Bible and the way to overcome it is clearly taught by the word of God. Death is therefore not a mystery to all who believe in Christ Jesus.

2. For others, Death is a cause of grief

Somehow, in our minds, death is far removed as a possibility even among our aged parents and friends with terminal diseases. Even when news of plane crashes and car accidents are reported routinely, and when we learn that someone we know have perished in the incident, inevitably, it comes as a shock (as if we think that we and those we know are immune from death).

Death causes deep grief because of its permanent nature. It is so final, so complete, so irreversible. Death is indeed a cause of grief for the Christian as well as the non-Christian because we will never see our loved ones in the way we are used.

Yet grief for the Christian is not totally hopeless because death to the Christian is not a final separation but an early departure that will finally lead to our reunion in heaven forever and ever.

King David has this to say after mourning over the death of his still-born child by his beloved wife, Bath-sheba in 2 Samuel 12:23: "He is dead now, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

Indeed, the Bible tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

3. Death should be welcomed

In truth, death should be welcomed because death is a release from the limitations of this life. We are afraid of death because it is a mystery. We grieve and are in distress, because of our sorrow. Yet we do not need to be afraid of death nor be distressed by it but to welcome it, rejoice in it and thank God for it.

A week ago, my wife and I were at AMK community hospital. In a large ward, we found many old people infirmed in some way that needed special care. Some could not feed themselves; many needed help to go to the bathroom. After we left that place, Nat expressed to me how depressing the situation was. I fully agreed with her observation.

Yes, this world is depressing. Life is depressing and our only hope - our only release is death. Imagine if all of us were immortal - what then? Think about it for a moment.

We would go through the passages of birth, childhood, teenage years, youth, manhood, prime and senior years... still alive and kicking, never to die. Yet each day, we become more feeble, our life-support system no longer able to perform motor-coordination functions for even the most routine tasks. Our vision blurring, memory gone but still around... living! Wouldn't that be perpetual hell? Indeed the ramifications are frightening!

Then imagine our earth full of weak, feeble oldies or evil people part of humanity forever and ever. But in death - we have release, renewal and like nature - as Jesus tells us in John 12:24:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." In sowing and reaping, in the seasons of winter and spring and in birth and death, we see release, renewal and resurrection.

So as we take a look at death squarely in the face, we unravel the mystery, lighten the grief, find reason, purpose and meaning on this subject - and more, find hope in the resurrection of Christ.

Let us keep close within our hearts these words of Jesus from God's eternal book:

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." John 11:25-26.