

Brian's Sermon Text for Sunday Worshiping at Brentwood

Sunday, Oct 25, 2020

Dealing with Death

(Psalm 90: 13-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:12-28)



If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain.

(1 Cor 15:13)

Word to Ponder = Death

Congregational Wisdom = passage, transition, depart earthly bounds, reward, release, time to celebrate rather than mourn, God's presence, ascension and new life defeats death, finality, one door closes and another one opens, enter eternal life, free us from trials, life beyond

I want to begin these reflections with a disclaimer.

I have not faced the imminent reality of my own death.

I have not sat at the bedside for days or weeks of someone close to me who has been dying.

I have not talked a teen out of suicide.

Dealing with death is not something with which I have intimate immediate experience.

I'm not confident that I know what I'm talking about.

But many of you do.

You have lost loved ones recently or a while ago.
That loss will be with you as long as you live.

You are walking with loved ones
who are going through life-threatening
changes in their bodies,
with them in their uncertainties and fears,
their faith and their resilience
as they ebb and flow.

You are facing the changes in our own bodies,
and adjusting to new realities
as caring professionals and friends
seek to cultivate healing and/or comfort.

We are all reeling from the impact of this pandemic
as it ravages families and communities
in ways that stun our souls.

So, we know all too deeply
the sting of death.

So did Paul and his Corinthian friends.
They lived in a world of imperial impositions.
They lived in a city with nothing
we would recognize as good sanitation or health care.
Death was a daily reality on the streets of Corinth.

And Paul especially lived with the threat of death
because of his illnesses and his chosen calling.
We don't know the exact nature of his illnesses,
but he says enough for us to realize they were chronic.
And because he was proclaiming
the forgiving and reconciling love of God
in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension
of Jesus, the Nazareth-born prophet and preacher,

he was scorned, stoned, jailed, beaten, and threatened with death.

In the face of all of this, at least from the records we have,
and I consider them reliable,
he faced death with a calm that astounds me.
Deep in his soul there is a confidence
in the life-giving energy
of his Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer
that gives him resilience in the midst of his fears
and carries him on with a hope that is unshakeable.

Paul deals with death by focusing his attention
on the assurance given to him,
an assurance seeded deep in his soul by the Holy Spirit,
that he will be enabled to be with and for Jesus Christ
in everything that happens in this world and the next.

He can be that kind of presence
until the final breath he takes in this earthly form
because of the assurance he has accepted that
*“neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor rulers,
nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
(Romans 8:38-39)

I can't convince you of that mercy and grace.
I can testify to it in my fumbling way.
And I can believe deeply that the Holy Spirit
will cultivate that faith in and among us.

My Notes



My Prayers

Prayers of the People

Assure us deep in our souls that you have heard these prayers spoken aloud into this worshiping or quietly within.

And hear these common prayers this morning:
for all those dealing with death in its many forms;
for all those resisting death in their many ways;
for the gift of your calm and comfort as we pass through death;
for a loving resilience in our mourning;
for a concerted endeavour to control this virus;
for hope to endure and transcend its impact;
for wisdom in the choices we make publicly and privately;
[two or three phrases that arise from prayers offered by the people]

And help us hear again the comfort and challenge, the gift and risk, of your prayer that has inspired your people for generations:

[singing of the Lord's Prayer]