

Devotions for Friday, May 22, 2020

*Bread for the Journey*

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*You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:1-7*

What is the bridge between death and life? Not to life “in heaven”, but life here, now, in this present moment?

The author of this letter was certain that the Ephesians were dead in their sins. He would have been equally certain that we too were dead in our sins. Death is a powerful motivator, or perhaps more accurately, a deep desire to avoid death is a powerful motivator. As such the fear of death has been used throughout human history to control people. Is it any wonder that the Christian faith has been a threat to those who want you, me, all of us to “toe the line”?

The Good News the church has proclaimed for generations is that death has lost it's sting. It is no longer to be feared. The power of death to instill fear has been cast aside by the power of love that God has for you, for me, for all of us. *God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead ... made us alive together with Christ!*

As I write these words over 92,000 Americans have died from complications of COVID-19. That's the number we know of, health officials tell us it is likely higher due to our limited ability to test for the disease. That's more dead than we lost in Vietnam. More dead than we lost in Hurricane Katrina. More dead than we lost on 911. To put it in perspective, it is as if a fully loaded jumbo jet is crashing, one plane every 12 minutes. 12 minutes from now, another plane crashes, all souls lost. That is a lot of death. Is the power of God's love for you strong enough to free you from the fear of so much death haunting us, stalking us, leading us into grief? What is the bridge to carry you from this death to life?

The bridge is there, but to see it we need to have a new paradigm from which to view all of life. That paradigm, or world view for we who are Easter people, is grace. In the passage above the author seemingly had to pause to remind the reader of this principle upon which our world view is built, *by grace you have been saved*. The bridge we need to walk to cross from death to life is a gift - it is *grace*. All that empowers us as Christians is a gift. God's love is a gift to us. God's forgiveness is a gift to us. God's promises of support, of freedom from fear, of life, all are gifts. *By grace you have been saved*.

Hold onto that truth today. Walk across the bridge built of that truth today. Live in the midst of today's struggles, today's rising death count from COVID-19, from all that would try to well up fear in your soul, walk away from it all, across the bridge with which God has gifted you. *By grace you have been saved!*

Thanks be to God!