

We're All Gonna Die

Homily for Ash Wednesday Service

2 Corinthians 5-6

Ash Wednesday, 2008

“Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust; we commit the soul of our brother to you O Lord of life and his body to earth, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection.”

I have said those words at gravesides too many times to be counted. It has never been easy, though it has often been rewarding.

How could marking death be rewarding?

The preacher in Ecclesiastes tells us that it is ‘better to be in the house of mourning than the house of partying.’ Well now, that is an odd world view.

Why does wisdom suggest that we need to have seasons in our life when we contemplate death? Because we’re all gonna die!

Not only that, but as followers of Christ we not only face the reality of leaving this life for the eternal, but living the eternal in this life – which means that this temporal has to scoot over and make room for it.

That movement is what we could call “dying daily.”

We’re all gonna die. And if you want to follow Christ, you’re gonna die every day too.

Paul puts it this way in the passage: “As dying, yet behold, we live” (2 Corinthians 6:9).

I. The Blessing of Brokenness

- Jesus breaks the bread to feed the 5000
- Jesus is broken for us – John 12:24 ff
- Jesus calls us into the fellowship of this brokenness – Luke 14

II. The Apostolic Experience

- Paul's sense of death and despair – 2 Corinthians 1:8-9
- Paul's sense of grace flowing from his dying – 2 Corinthians 4:12

And so we come to the season of preparation for the victory of Christ over death and the grave, over sin and Satan. Yet this victory is preceded by death. Lent is about ashes, about mortality, about mourning and loss. It isn't very seeker sensitive. Well, at least on a superficial level. You see, it is seeker essential. There is a dying the Christian embraces that brings life to others. And by this we point people to Christ, the Prince of Life, who gave himself that we might live. In our lent-living and dying we take up our ministry of reconciliation announcing the gift of righteousness to sin-stained multitudes. So let us embrace the ashes, and the mourning; let us wash our faces for the fasting; death is at work in us that life might be at work in others. We must do this. After all, we're all gonna die.