

“Comfortable talking about the Grave”

A meditation for an Easter Morning Sunrise Service, 4/17/2022,  
Faith, Radcliff

Followed by these readings:

Job 17:13-15, 19:23-27; Mark 9:30-32; Luke 24:1-8; John 6:35-40;  
Revelation 20:11-21:2, 21:22-27

How comfortable are you talking about the grave?

Both my wife’s parents and my parents separately—I can remember several years ago, they went out shopping for tombstones and funeral arrangements. Neither couple went by themselves. They invited other family members along to do the same for themselves. I don’t know if they were looking for a volume discount or what, but they all ended up having a rather enjoyable time of it. It was almost like a party. I guess I was glad for them, but when it’s *your* parents doing that, it just doesn’t sit well to hear them speak so glibly of such things. Not that I want them to be depressed about it, just, it’s the grave we’re talking about.

Every once in a great while people, members, give me their funeral plans. A couple times it has been servicemen going overseas. Some other times it has been people who, by their calculation, seem to have a rather limited time on this earth. It’s just a little disconcerting to hear parishioners speaking so clearly about such things. Not that I want them to pretend it isn’t a reality, just, it’s the grave we’re talking about.

In many cultures, maybe all cultures, it’s not exactly forbidden, but it is frowned upon to speak of these things too clearly or too much. It’s the grave we’re talking about!

Yet the Bible does this openly and frequently. Today we hear several people in the Bible doing this: Job, Jesus, angels, John. Listen to them all talk about the grave, about death. See what you think.

I think some people hear the word “death” and their brakes lock up. They don’t hear anything after that. When a pastor starts to mirror the topics that the Bible talks about, about

big and heavy things like heaven and hell, sin and death, those people ask pastors, “Why do you have to talk about death so much?”

It’s kind of like listening to a fire academy instructor. You hear the instructor talk about fires: how fires start, how fires burn, how much damage fires cause—and so you come to the conclusion that this guy must be a pyromaniac. How silly! Of course he has to talk about fires! A lot! To defeat fires you have to talk about fires.

I think that’s what sometimes happens with pastors and Christians in general when they talk about death and the grave. The farthest thing from our minds is a gleeful fascination with death. We have a fascination with beating death! We’re not afraid to talk about it because we know it can be done, has been done! We want to talk about it because that’s what the people of this morning’s Bible readings talk about: a fascination with beating death.

The Bible authors have a fascination with it, rather than a fear of it, because they know the answer. They know how it gets beaten, how it has been beaten. While Job through faith spoke of it as a future act of God; Jesus, John and the angels point out the moment death and the grave were defeated, that first Easter when Christ rose from the dead.

Listen this morning, and learn to talk like the Bible talks about the grave. Not from a morbid fascination, but to let others know that we know how to beat death and the grave!