

Death Is So Unfair!

There was a life insurance company ad on television a few years ago. Mom and Dad and their darling children are walking in the park on a sunny summer afternoon. Everyone is wearing ear to ear smiles. Life is good! But then Dad's image begins to get blurry. He fades out of the picture altogether. We notice now that Mom's face is sad. The once glowing faces of the children are now weepy. Something tragic has happened to Dad. The voice of the television announcer cuts in and asks, "What if he were gone tomorrow? Are you prepared?" An unscrupulous way to sell life insurance, to be sure, but you have to admit: death can be cruel!

No one is more familiar with such an unjust ending than Moses. Moses had been faithful to God. all his life. And then God cuts it short, just before he sets foot in the promised land. If anyone should have received special treatment, it ought to have been Moses. He trusted in God. He stood up to Pharaoh. and spoke God's words. He lead Israel out of slavery. There is no doubt about it, Moses was faithful. He gave his life to God. But just as Moses climbed Mount Nebo to survey the wondrous land on the other side of the Jordan, God tells him "Moses, this is the land which I promised, but you will not cross over." (Deut. 34:4) And Moses dies. Now that's cruel! How could God lead Moses this far and then bring his journey to a grinding halt, just a stone's throw from the goal? We cry out "That's not Fair!" Who more than Moses ought to cross into the promised land? But isn't that death's mysterious way? Too often death cuts our lives short. And with no explanation. "So Moses the servant of the Lord died." (Deut 34:5) That's all scripture has to say about it. "Moses died." We die. And isn't death's timing so often bad. A life, such a promising life, cut so short. Untimely! Unfair! Unjust!

So death is a confusing time. We do celebrate! Death finds its meaning in Easter and in the resurrection. Indeed we find our meaning in the resurrection. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we know that the our loved ones, and we, shall be raised. Therefore we celebrate. Romans tells us 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) The one for whom we mourn is in heaven,

in presence of God.

Yet at the same time, we grieve. The joy we feel that our loved one is with God does not in any way make human grief unchristian. The very love we have for each other in Christ brings deep sorrow when we are parted by death. Jesus himself wept at the grave of his friend. We weep at the loss of a daughter, sister, friend.

So, while we rejoice that one we love has entered into the nearer presence of our Lord, we also mourn the loss of a loved one. And we give thanks to our loving God, who through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, made eternal life, her and our eternal life possible.

The Rev. Bert Eaton is Rector of St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church , located at 503 W. Broad St. in Swansboro.