

Advent 1 – Death

Introduction

Two very different poems:

Do not go gentle into that good night, by Dylan Thomas

O love that will not let me go, by George Matheson

People will have very different feelings about the fact that they will one day die: fear or hope.

A Christian understanding of death

1. Humans were created with the potential of living for ever.
Genesis 2.7 – man is created from the earth (dust). He lives when God breathes his life into him. Life is God's gift.
Genesis 2.9 – two special trees in the middle of the garden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There is potential for everlasting life.
2. Death entered the world when humans disobeyed God.
Genesis 3.4 – the Devil tempts Eve, telling her that she will not die if she eats the fruit of the tree of knowledge.
Genesis 3.19 – the result of listening to the Devil is death – “from dust you came and to dust you shall return. (Genesis 3.21-23)
3. This death is more than just physical. It is spiritual as well.
Genesis 3.21-23 – separation from God.
4. Physical and Spiritual death is common to all people
Romans 6.12 – “Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin”
Romans 6.18 – “Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men...”
5. Death is seen as the realm of the Devil
Hebrews 2.14 – “...him who holds the power of death – that is the devil”
6. More positively:
But:
Stephen – at his martyrdom giving his spirit into God's hands (Acts 7.59)
Paul wishing to go and be with God (Philippians 1.21-24)
(Will deal next week with the issue of exactly where go when die, but for now, go with this.)
Testimony of Christians throughout ages. Mother Teresa – “Why should I be afraid of dying? Dying is going home to be with God.”

7. How come the change to positivity?

Jesus! –

Jesus three times raised the dead – signs of his power over death!

John 14.1-6 – Jesus going to get a place ready for his friends and his promise that he will take them there.

Jesus' resurrection – living proof that Jesus, the son of God could somehow overcome this curse of spiritual and physical death.

8. Romans 5.12-19

The contrast between Adam and Christ:

Vs12 – Adam sinned, resulting in death. As his descendants share in this sin, and so all die.

Vs 18 – Christ's act of righteousness (death on cross) brings life for all men.

9. How might 'all men' access this 'life'?

Romans 3.21-26: through faith in Jesus.

10. Revelation 22.1-6

Vs1 – The river of the water of life

Vs2- The tree of life – we have come full circle and once again, humanity has the opportunity to eat the fruit of the tree of life, and live for ever.

Listen to the Nunc Dimitis

Invite people to reflect on how they feel about their own mortality.

Light a candle and place on the "hands of Christ"

Prayers

P96 of Times and Seasons

Nunc Dimitis

Blessing