

A Christian Perspective on Death and Dying Part 2

- I. "Burial of the Dead" vs. "Celebration of Life"
 - A. "Celebrations of Life" ignore the reality of death
 1. Let's not talk about it and maybe it will go away
 2. Looks back on the life of the person that is past
 3. Is about keeping people alive through memory
 - B. "Burial of the Dead" confronts the reality of death head on
 1. We can talk about death and name it because we have victory over it
 2. We do not need to use euphemisms like "passed away" or "expired"
 3. Burial service looks forward to life in God's presence and resurrection at the end of the age
 4. It is an Easter service that fully embraces sorry in the midst of hope
- II. Should a funeral service be in a church?
 - A. When possible, yes
 1. This is, after all, where the family gathers
 - B. However, if space or location is an issue it can be someplace else
- III. Can the committal happen before the burial service
 - A. Yes
- IV. Why is the coffin closed and covered?
 - A. Even though the burial service is for the individual, the focus of the service is on Jesus
 - B. The pall covering the casket ensures that all are treated with equal dignity and respect
- V. What about flowers and pictures?
 - A. Flowers
 1. Can be distracting and gaudy
 2. Florists fighting for real estate
 3. Accidents can happen
 - B. Pictures in the worship space
 1. Again, we need to remember that the focus is Jesus, not the individual
 2. It is fine to put a picture on the booklet
- VI. What kind of music is appropriate?
 - A. Hymns and contemporary Christian music are all good
 - B. Secular music should be avoided as well as sappy, sentimental quasi religious songs like, "You Life Me Up," and "Going Home."
 - C. Easter songs and songs that focus on the resurrection are always appropriate
 - D. I have a list of appropriate song suggestions
- VII. Why are there no eulogies at Anglican funerals?
 - A. Once again the focus of the service is on Jesus
 - B. There is typically a sermon which may address the individual while speaking to the Gospel and our hope for the resurrection and eternal life in God's kingdom
 - C. Eulogies and remembrances are appropriate during a reception following the service
- VIII. Should there be communion at a funeral?
 - A. It is acceptable to either have it or not have it
 - B. If most in attendance will be Anglicans, it is entirely appropriate
 - C. If not, I typically recommend against it since it usually causes quite a bit of confusion

IX. What about the body?

- A. For this discussion, we need to remember that this is primarily about our Christian witness to the hope we have in Jesus
 - 1. It is not a question of God's ability or inability to do something
 - 2. But even in death, our witness continues
 - 3. Our hope is in the resurrection
 - 4. We believe that our body is still, in some way, "us"
 - 5. The physical world will be redeemed
- B. Burial has always been the preferred method for Christians
 - 1. There was a time when Christians were all buried facing east
 - 2. That way when Christ returns and they are raised, they will be facing Jesus
 - 3. This is a testimony to their belief in the resurrection
- C. What about cremation?
 - 1. While not specifically prohibited in Scripture, some Christian denominations (e.g. the Orthodox) refuse to do it
 - 2. For many it has become a practical necessity
- D. If we do cremation, how should the remains be handled?
 - 1. They should be buried or interred
 - 2. They should be kept together and not separated out
 - 3. They should not be scattered
 - 4. Remember, what we do with our bodies is a witness to what we believe God will do one day
- E. What about donating our bodies to science
 - 1. Can be a powerful witness to our emphasis on the sanctity of life
 - 2. Make sure body is being donated to a group that will return the cremated remains back to the family for burial

X. Remembering the Church

- A. All church members are encouraged to remember their local parish in their wills
 - 1. This can help reduce the financial burden to the church
 - 2. It can also be used to leave a lasting legacy for future generations
- B. What types of gives are appropriate?
 - 1. One time bequest
 - 2. Trusts
 - 3. Endowments
- C. Gifts can be general or specific
 - 1. Dangers of specified giving

XI. Christian grieving

- A. It is OK to be sad!
 - 1. Jesus himself wept at the death of Lazarus
 - 2. Mourning is an important part of dealing with the reality of death head on
 - 3. You don't need to "be strong"
- B. However, we also need to remember that we are called to mourn with hope and not despair
 - 1. We know that death is not the end