

Jesus Is the Death of Death

By Rev. Donavon Riley

He said to them, "Leave! The girl's not dead. She's sleeping." But they laughed at him. (Matthew 9:24)



In the Name + of Jesus. AMEN.

How do you deal with death? How do you wrap your heart around death each time it happens? Is there a coping method? Is there a remembering? Do you take it hard? Do you seek therapy? Do you draw strength from others? Do you go home and sit by yourself? Do you even want to talk about it, or are you just stuck with the cruel grip of death on your heart, and it feels like no talking will relieve the pain?

What can you say about the worst of all losses? What good is there in death? You remember the people you've lost. Their unique personalities. The experiences with them. The memories of them. All that they gave you in their life, and in their death. What their life taught you, and what their death teaches you. The mark they left on you. Those precious moments. Those precious memories. Their beauty. What they gave to you.

Then comes death. Death is wretched, and horrible, and cruel. Death isn't fair. Death is inescapable. There's no way out. No one gets out alive. Death is part of life. Like the contrast between darkness and light, without death there's no life.

That's life as you see it. But there's no death with Jesus. With Jesus death has lost its sting. Death has lost its bite. Where Jesus says, "She's not dead, she's sleeping," death dies. Where Jesus says, "You're not dead, you're sleeping," death dies. Jesus is the death of death.

Jesus sets you free from the wretched, horrible, cruel grip of death. Jesus sets you free in order to give you to the day. Jesus gives you to the day to live with purpose and passion. Jesus gives you to the day to wake up with gratitude, to wake up thankful for the morning, to go into the world and live. But not life as you see it. Not life that's gnawed on by death. Jesus gives you to the day to live free from death's wretched bite.

So don't cry anymore. Don't mourn anymore. Remember, but don't dwell upon death. Instead, laugh, and love, and embrace, and praise and thank Jesus for life. He's your Life, and all He gives to you today. You live with Christ Jesus, and those who now sleep wait for Jesus to come and speak to them, to wake them up, and to call them home.

To death, Jesus says, "No more. No more excuses for why someone should stay dead. No more chasing people down. No more preying upon peoples' indecision, no more lies, no more preying upon peoples' weakness." No more time for death because now is the time for Jesus—God's strength and will—who says to death, "You shall die!"

Jesus does the work. Jesus holds the line. Jesus suffers and bleeds. Jesus hangs on the cross that's meant for you. And there, on the cross, your wretched, horrible, cruel death hung upon Him so that you can now say with total confidence that you've been crucified with Christ. It's no longer you who live, but Christ who lives in you. And the life you now live in the flesh you live by faith in the Son of God, who loves you and gives Himself for you (Galatians 2:20).

So how do you deal with death? How do you wrap your head around death each time it happens? You say, "Jesus is the death of you, my death. In Baptism, I died with Jesus on the cross, so that I may now walk in a new life."

On account of Jesus' work for you, you live a crucified life because Jesus is the death of death, and the life you now live you live by faith in the Son of God, who loves you and gives Himself for you. Jesus does the work for you. Jesus holds the line for you. Jesus is your Life. AMEN.